

The Study Bible

Edited By

JOHN T. STIRLING

The
Study
Bible

THE STUDY BIBLE

Editor JOHN STIRLING

I & II CORINTHIANS

*A Little Library
of Exposition*

with

New Studies

by

A. C. UNDERWOOD, D.D.

Principal of Rawdon College, Leeds

AND

THE BISHOP OF MIDDLETON



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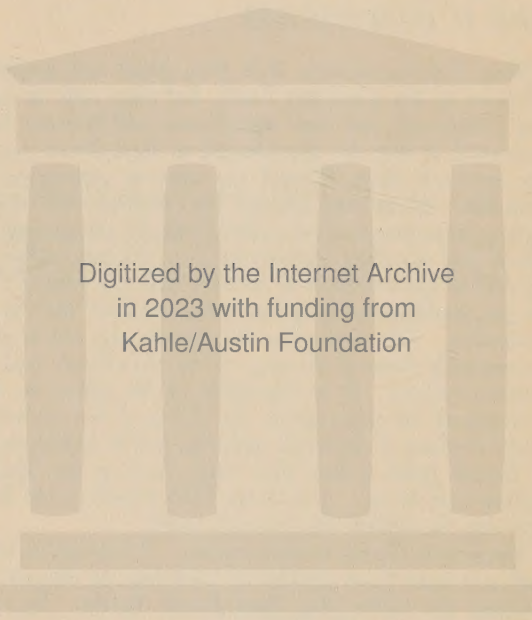
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TO THE READER OF I AND II CORINTHIANS

These Epistles contain, it is true, great and profound revelations of the Christian Faith, but these will be more easily understood, and their significance will be more fully appreciated, if they are approached, as these letters permit us to approach them, through the common experiences of human life. If we read through the chapters with an eye for the circumstances which called forth the correspondence we shall find ourselves transported to a city not unlike our own, and in the company of citizens who are face to face with the problems which perpetually confront the devout city-dweller. The difficulties the Apostle sets out to meet are essentially those of the city, of the city church, and the Christian citizen. It is impossible in his letters to miss the sounds of the city's strife, the shame of the city's sins, and the shadows of the city's suffering, but he is undaunted. His Gospel holds a love that never fails, a life that is deathless and divine ; and to the little church in the heart of the city, he delivers the heavenly secret.

Much more there is in these letters. Saints and scholars of all ages have never wearied of exploring the wisdom and exhibiting the riches they have found therein. Some of their discoveries this little book preserves.



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CONTENTS

	PAGES
1. THE FIRST AND SECOND EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS	1-11
2. NOTES AND COMMENTS	13-107
3. THE PROBLEMS OF 1 AND 2 CORINTHIANS	109-144

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

1 CORINTHIANS	PAGE
I. 2. The Church at Corinth	15
I. 2. Called to be Saints	16
I. 12. Party Cries	17
I. 13. A Searching Question	19
I. 23. The Heart of the Gospel	20
II. 2. The Heart of the Apostle	22
II. 7. The Divine Mystery	23
III. 9. The Divine Work	25
III. 11. The Great Foundation	26
III. 12-13. The Growing Building	27
III. 16. The Temple of God	29
III. 22-23. The Church's Charter	30
IV. 1. Stewards of the Mysteries	31
VI. 19-20. Concerning the Body	32
VIII. 13. Stumbling-blocks	33
IX. 24. The Christian Race	36
IX. 26. The Christian Athlete	37
IX. 27. The Near Antagonist	39
X. 13. The Way of Escape	40
X. 16-17. The Cup of Blessing	41

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

1 CORINTHIANS

	PAGE
X. 31. The Sanctified Life . . .	43
XI. 24. The Consecration of Memory .	45
XI. 26. Till He Come . . .	47
XII. 4. Spiritual Gifts . . .	48
XIII. 1. The Hymn of Love . . .	51
XIII. 2. Head and Heart . . .	54
XIII. 3. Hand and Heart . . .	55
XIII. 4-7. The Life of Love . . .	57
XIII. 8. The Victory of Love . . .	58
XIII. 11. Christian Manhood . . .	59
XIII. 12. Dim Mirrors . . .	60
XIII. 13. Faith, Hope, and Love . . .	61
XV. 12. The Question of the Resurrection	63
XV. 20. The Resurrection of Christ .	65
XV. 35. The Resurrection Body . . .	67
XV. 58. The Heavenly Calling. . .	70
XVI. 13-14. Quit You Like Men . . .	71

2 CORINTHIANS

I. 3-4. The God of Comfort . . .	72
I. 20. The Yea and Amen . . .	73
I. 22. The Earnest of the Spirit . . .	74
II. 11. Satan's Devices . . .	75
II. 14. Triumph in Christ . . .	76
III. 2. Living Epistles . . .	78
III. 5. Our Sufficiency . . .	79
III. 6. The Letter and the Spirit . . .	80
III. 17. The Source of our Liberty . . .	81
III. 18. Reflected Glory . . .	82
IV. 7. Earthen Vessels . . .	84
IV. 16. Daily Renewal . . .	85
IV. 17. Our Light Affliction . . .	86
IV. 18. Things Temporal and Eternal .	87

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

2 CORINTHIANS

PAGE

V. 1.	Our Clay Cottage . . .	89
V. 10.	The Judgment-seat . . .	90
V. 14.	Love's Constraint . . .	91
V. 17.	A New Creature . . .	92
V. 19.	Reconciling the World . . .	93
VI. 10.	The Christian Paradox . . .	94
VII. 10.	Godly Sorrow . . .	95
VIII. 9.	The Grace of our Lord . . .	96
IX. 7.	The Cheerful Giver . . .	97
X. 3.	Spiritual Warfare . . .	98
XI. 30.	Grounds for Glorying. . .	99
XII. 7.	A Thorn in the Flesh. . .	100
XII. 8, 9.	The Apostle's Prayer . . .	102
XIII. 4.	The Power of God . . .	104
XIII. 11.	Christian Perfection . . .	105
XIII. 14.	The Apostolic Benediction . . .	106

An Appreciation

THE FIRST AND SECOND EPISTLES
TO THE CORINTHIANS

BY

A. C. UNDERWOOD, B.LITT., D.D.

THE
FIRST
STUDY

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etc.

THE FIRST AND SECOND EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

BY A. C. UNDERWOOD, B.LITT., D.D.

LIKE St. Paul's disciples at Corinth, the converts of a lady missionary in India had quarrelled among themselves and had shown a spiteful, malicious, and unforgiving spirit. She was wellnigh appalled by the revelation that came to her, but after a time she was able to see things in a truer perspective. "I sent up a prayer of gratitude," she says, "to Peter for his lying and swearing, and going on lying and swearing even after years of Christ's companionship. Equally thankfully I addressed the other disciples . . . for every bad, mean, cowardly thing they ever did, and every stupidity they evinced about Christ's aims. These were all so many rays of comfort. I yearned for more, and turned in my mind to the Corinthians, who satisfied my thirst for badness."¹

Conditions in South India in the twentieth century and conditions in Corinth in the first resemble one another in many important respects. Indeed, the most illuminating commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians is not to be found in books, but in the experiences of Christian missionaries in some present-day stronghold of heathenism such as Miss Christlieb describes in her book just quoted. If anything, the moral failures of the Corinthian Christians were worse than those of her converts. The Church at Corinth was rent by faction and party strife (1 Cor. i. 10—iii. 23). One of its members was guilty of the gross sin of incest and his fellow church-members were disposed to treat

¹ M. L. Christlieb, *An Uphill Road in India*, p. 231.

THE STUDY BIBLE

the case lightly (ch. v.). They were bringing lawsuits against one another before heathen courts, and so causing the heathen to scoff (ch. vi.). The celebration of the Lord's Supper was disgraced by some who ate gluttonously and even got drunk at the common meal which immediately preceded the solemn celebration. Their assemblies for worship were often very disorderly.

The highly gifted Corinthians were so anxious to display their gifts that in the same meeting one would preach, another pray, another sing a psalm, and yet another "speak in a tongue." Indeed, so little control was exercised over the conduct of the meeting that several would be speaking together amidst scenes of the greatest confusion. Ch. xii. ver. 3 seems to suggest that a case had been known of a church-member being so far carried away by excitement as to exclaim, "Cursed be Jesus." St. Paul tells the Corinthians that, if an unbeliever came into their meeting when a number of them were simultaneously "speaking in a tongue," he would think they were insane (xiv. 23). In any one meeting, therefore, not more than three persons at the most are to be allowed to "speak in a tongue," and they are to do so one at a time. He further adds that prophecy (animated preaching which is intelligible to all) is to be preferred to "tongues" (ecstatic and unintelligible praise and prayer). That gift of the Spirit is the most highly to be prized which makes for the unity and edification of the Church, not that which is the most dramatic. Moreover, they may be sure that nothing which dishonours the Lord Jesus can have been spoken in the Spirit (xii. 3). The cure for all their factions and disorders is the cultivation among them of a spirit of unity and love. Hence the

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

Apostle's immortal hymn in praise of love (ch. xiii.) written to a Church that showed so little brotherly love.

The picture thus gained by a careful perusal of 1 Corinthians is in many respects a disappointing one. To some, it will come as a shock to read of the sins and failings of the Corinthian Christians. We are all apt to idealise the first generation of Christians and to create an altogether fanciful picture of their virtues and loyalty. Living as we do in a Christian land and having to make but little sacrifice for the profession of our faith, it is easy and natural for us to ascribe almost incredible virtues and fortitude to converts who have come over to Christianity from heathenism, whether in the Apostolic age or in the mission-field to-day. The truth is that such converts are, as a rule, in a far inferior position to those who have lived all their lives in a Christian land and have behind them a long Christian tradition. The convert from heathenism has to contend against his heathen ancestry and has to breathe the pagan atmosphere which still surrounds him. His conceptions of Christian morality are often very inadequate. The most he can do is heroically to surrender himself to such light as he has seen. But that light is often very small, though it is enough to bring the Gospel home to his soul. He will, therefore, often disappoint the missionary who was the means of his conversion. Indian Christians are no more all Sadhu Sundar Singhs than all the Corinthian Christians were St. Pauls and St. Johns.

We are grateful, then, for the varied picture which 1 Corinthians gives us of the life of the Church to which it was addressed. We are saved from fanciful idealisations, as we try to reconstruct the actual Christian life

THE STUDY BIBLE

of the Apostolic age ; and we are taught what to expect under similar conditions in the mission-field to-day.

For the majority of men and women, however, the main interest of 1 and 2 Corinthians will lie in the manner in which St. Paul deals with the questions put to him by his converts at Corinth. They invited his opinions on some of the moral problems arising out of the most private and intimate relationships of life. From a careful study of the substance and spirit of the Apostle's answers much guidance may be obtained for the solution of not a few problems that press upon us to-day. The Corinthians wanted to know whether one of the parties to a heathen marriage was to separate from the other, when he or she became a Christian. The modern man wants to know what is the Christian point of view with reference to marriage with a deceased wife's sister or a deceased husband's brother. The Corinthians asked whether married people were to separate after their conversion and thereafter live as celibates (1 Cor. vii.). Such a question is hardly likely to be asked to-day, but there are some who would like to know the mind of the Church on the question of the use of contraceptives in marriage. Is the Roman Catholic Church right in forbidding their use absolutely or is Dean Inge right in saying that it is a matter which must be left to the conscience of the individual ? The Corinthians asked what they were to do about food offered to idols. The problem was a real one to them, for most of the meat exposed for sale in the shambles had been offered in temples consecrated to the worship of idols. The modern man wants to know whether he ought to be a teetotaler, or whether it is definitely unchristian to have a ticket in

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

a Derby sweepstake, or whether he ought to oppose the practice of vivisection.

St. Paul does not work out in 1 Corinthians a system of social ethics, and he is careful to say that in some matters he does not speak with apostolic authority, but simply gives his own honest opinion. Nevertheless, the modern man will find definite guidance in this epistle, because St. Paul did not answer his correspondents as a mere casuist, but lifted each case of conscience into the lofty sphere of Christian principles. He did not answer like the Delphic Oracle, but let the Corinthians see the reasons and principles upon which he grounded his answers. Do they ask questions about celibacy and marriage, then the answer is given in the light of the principle that all must be done with the spiritual edification of the Christian in view. If they ask about eating meat offered to idols and at the same time remind him that they are emancipated people who know that idols are nothing and are quite incapable of influencing the food offered to them, he replies that they are to consider the feelings and scruples of their weaker brethren, because the law of love overrides their right to liberty in such matters.

Few things are more remarkable than the manner in which St. Paul combined respect for the freedom of his converts with very definite guidance. Not less noteworthy is the way in which he subordinated his own personal predilections to their circumstances and needs. He will not counsel them to remain celibate, though plainly he himself prefers the celibate to the married state. It is often truly said that in 1 Corinthians we have the beginnings of Christian casuistry. In these days, the very word "casuistry" has a sinister meaning for many minds. It suggests the morally crooked. It

THE STUDY BIBLE

conjures up visions of the worst features of the Jesuit system, and with it permission of mental reservations. In Roman Catholic circles casuistry has always bulked large, and the attempt has frequently been made to legislate definitely upon every doubtful point of conscience. The science continued to flourish in Protestant circles after the Reformation, but its life was short. It is more consistent with the genius of Protestantism to leave much to the enlightened conscience of the individual Christian. At present an attempt is being made in certain Anglican circles to revive the science of casuistry in order to lighten the burden resting upon the individual priest who hears confessions and is, therefore, called upon to give authoritative moral guidance upon an amazing variety of moral problems.

The objections to casuistry have often been stated. It too often resolves itself into a series of rules for the evasion of rules, and so degrades rather than exalts Christian morality. "The vice of casuistry," says a well-known philosopher, "is that . . . it at once degenerates into finding a good reason for what you mean to do." It thus tends to weaken the moral susceptibilities of the ordinary man. It is, moreover, a legal, or quasi-legal, way of treating the problems of morals. It tends to concern itself with what is legally safe rather than with what is morally commendable.

With reference to this matter there will, in all probability, always be two opposing schools of thought within the Christian Church. One school, which stresses obedience to authority, will aim at a precise and detailed determination of the limits between the prohibited and the allowable. The other school, which allows larger liberty to private judgment, will be content to proclaim the general principles of Christian

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

morality and leave their application to the enlightened Christian conscience. There can be little doubt as to which school would receive the support of the Apostle Paul. The care with which he exhibits the principles upon which he solved the moral problems of the Corinthians is clear evidence of his desire to respect the freedom of their consciences. We do not find him laying down "precepts," but "counsels." St. Paul had rejected the whole principle of legalism, and he was prepared to allow the conscience of the Christian man to legislate for itself in things indifferent. He who had fought for the freedom of the Christian man from a Jewish legalism was not likely to stultify himself by introducing a new legalism. He had done with Phariseism and stood now for the liberty of the Christian man. If he were here to-day, he would be impatient of the careful discussions of Roman casuists as to whether absolution given over the telephone is valid or invalid.

That the Apostle was no casuist may be seen from the strictures passed upon him by an able writer who is seeking to reinstate casuistry in Anglican theology. Writing of 1 Corinthians, Dr. Kenneth Kirk (*Conscience and its Problems*, p. 165) says: "The arguments by which he [St. Paul] supports his teaching are rarely clear, sometimes fallacious, and occasionally perfunctory." This is a singularly unsympathetic estimate of the Apostle, and arises out of the writer's disappointment that St. Paul preferred to remain an apostle of Christian liberty rather than to become a casuist. Dr. Kirk also takes exception to St. Paul's surrender of his Christian liberty to the higher law of Christian charity in the matter of meats offered to idols. "St. Paul's advice in the matter of 'idol-meats' would have

THE STUDY BIBLE

been disastrous," he says, "if the Church had followed it on the larger scale. Discrimination between the weaker brother who is genuinely charitable and anxious to see all that is good in an opponent's position and the weaker brother who is merely pig-headed and immovable is of fundamental importance if Christianity is to remain Christianity. But of the need for such discrimination St. Paul . . . gives us no hint in this discussion. It would appear to be all one to him whether the person who takes offence is a child groping earnestly after truth, or a prig refusing to contemplate the possibility of its existence elsewhere than in his own narrow and bigoted mind" (*op. cit.*, p. 172). All we can say of such a statement as this is that we refuse to believe that St. Paul was so utterly lacking in common sense. Besides, St. Paul almost certainly knew all the members of the Corinthian Church and would be able to judge for himself whether the scruples of the weaker brethren were mere crankiness or not.

That 1 and 2 Corinthians throb with a vital message for Christian men and women to-day may be seen if, by their help, we study the relations between St. Paul and the Corinthian Church. The Apostle's popularity had undergone an eclipse. Another more eloquent preacher had come along and had carried away some members of the congregation, so that they had formed an Apollos party. The congregation at Corinth was obviously subject to changing moods. They knew exactly the kind of ministry they wanted but not the kind of ministry they needed. Here again we have a situation with exact modern parallels, especially among those Churches where a man is called to the ministerial office by a vote of the Church members. Such a minister may start his career on a flood-tide of popu-

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

larity, only to discover after a while that the mood of the congregation has changed and that some are passing upon him the same criticisms that the Corinthians passed on St. Paul. They may complain that he is not as eloquent as some other preachers whom they have heard. Just so did the Corinthians compare to his disadvantage the rough speech of St. Paul with the polished rhetoric of Apollos (2 Cor. x. 10-18). There are some men who fall into a mood of despondency or even of resentment when they find that their ministry is not appreciated as once it was by those to whom they minister. But St. Paul did not allow himself to be soured or dispirited by the defection of his converts. On the contrary, he rose nobly to the occasion and won back their affection and confidence. The Corinthians were not an easy set of people to deal with. Indeed, they were very provoking. The peculiar problems of the Church and the character of some of its members would have tested any man's calibre and character. But St. Paul comes out of the ordeal unscathed and with our admiration for him greatly enhanced.

Very suggestive is the fact that he did not allow himself to be betrayed into any disparagement of Apollos. It was certainly very provoking for St. Paul to have some of his converts go over to one who appeared later on the scene. But in every reference to Apollos he puts him on a footing of perfect equality with himself. Paul planted, Apollos watered; Paul laid the foundation, Apollos built on the foundation; Paul planted the seedling of their faith, Apollos watered it. In any case, neither the planter nor the waterer counts for anything, but God who causes the plant to grow (1 Cor. iii. 5 ff.). There is not a single syllable that can be construed into a depreciation of Apollos. There

THE STUDY BIBLE

is just the dignified reminder to the Corinthians that in the end it is not they but God who will judge the work of both Apollos and himself. In the meantime, it is not required of God's stewards that they shall be successful, but only that they should be found faithful (1 Cor. iv. 2).

It is a very human situation and one that arises not infrequently in the Christian Church when a young minister comes as the colleague of an older man who has borne the burden and heat of the day, and his coming serves only to reveal the declining popularity of his senior and to foster the creation of cliques. In such circumstances it is of paramount importance that all concerned should follow the principle here enunciated by St. Paul that it matters nothing to whom the credit is given, so long as the work of Christ is done. One of the standing difficulties of Church life to-day is that there are some good Christian men and women who are excellent workers *for* others, but they seem to be constitutionally unable to work *with* others. St. Paul here manifests his ability to do both ; and the second task is a much more severe test of Christian character than the first. From the blunders and failings of the Corinthian Christians we can all learn much to-day.

If 1 Corinthians is of supreme value for the picture it gives us of the life of the first generation of Christians in a city like Corinth, and for the guidance it gives us on the manifold problems of life to-day, 2 Corinthians is specially valuable for the insight it gives us into St. Paul's inner life and feelings. The second letter shows us what manner of man St. Paul was. It is an out-pouring of his personal feelings and lays bare the secrets of his heart. Especially valuable in this connection are chapters iii. to vi., in which the Apostle

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

enlarges upon the deepest motives which animate the ministers of Jesus Christ and sustain them in all their trials. These chapters should form the constant study of all who are engaged in the Christian ministry and of all who aspire to it. From this section they may learn how futile their work will become if anything they say or do awakens suspicions in the minds of those to whom they minister ; how necessary it is for the Christian minister to win the respect and reverence of his people by the life he lives rather than by the office he holds. There are some Christian ministers who are inclined to fret at the popular demand that they should be better than other men. They would be shamed into acquiescence if they read and re-read these chapters, with their sublime picture of ministerial devotion and disinterestedness.

Christian literature begins for us with Paul's correspondence.—J. MOFFATT.

Paul was not attracted to Corinth by its natural beauty, nor yet by its commercial greatness. He was attracted by the throbbing human life within its walls, a life on whose shoreless, fathomless sea he longed to launch himself, to prove the power of his gospel as the redeeming grace of God. . . . To evangelise Corinth ! gay, self-satisfied, worldly, dissolute Corinth ! a city in which all the brutality of the West and all the sensuality of the East met and were rolled into one.

R. D. SHAW.

We are here (1 Cor.) allowed to witness the earliest conflict of Christianity with the culture and vices of the ancient classical world.—DEAN STANLEY.

In its fullness of light and shadow it (1 Cor.) vividly reproduces the life of a typical Gentile-Christian community, seething with the beginnings of that age-long warfare of the highest and lowest in man, which constitutes the history of the Church of Christ from the time when His fire was kindled on the earth down to this day.—A. ROBERTSON.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Drawn from many
sources to illustrate
the great Texts and
Teaching of the Book

MANY QUESTIONS are raised in these Epistles. Some are of a local and intimate nature ; some are historical and have a close bearing on the authority and course of the Apostle's ministry ; several deal with the great doctrines of the Christian Faith, while others are concerned with the party cries which threatened to destroy the unity of the Early Church. To the student all these matters are important, but he will not expect to find them all set out and elucidated in this small volume. Many of the controversial subjects are, of course, introduced, but our aim has been to choose those texts and select those quotations which are of particular value in the development of a personal faith and the enrichment of individual character. Hence, also, the preference among the contributors of those who have, as preachers, used these epistles for discourses on the practice of the Christian life. One of the first who so applied these letters of Paul was the "Golden-mouthed" CHRYSOSTOM. At Antioch in the fourth century he delivered a number of homilies which devout men consider to have been the most perfect specimen of his mind and teaching. Among English preachers who have in a like manner used these Epistles, but not on the same scale, may be mentioned JOHN COLET, the friend of Erasmus, and, nearer to our own time, F. W. ROBERTSON of Brighton. Both these sought in Expository Lectures on the Epistles to the Corinthians to bring the teaching of the Apostle into close relation with life. Giving these names does not mean that writers renowned more for their scholarship than their eloquence have not contributed to the following pages. Biblical scholars of all schools have been brought into service, and the reader will find as he studies the Notes and Comments that in certain instances he is encouraged to compare the various interpretations which the different expositors offer.

I CORINTHIANS

THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

The church of God which is at Corinth.

1 Cor. I. 2.

A GREAT and joyful paradox.—BENGEL.

Religion and Corinth (a city notorious for debauchery),

might have seemed terms utterly incapable of combination.—J. BRYCE.

The Corinth of St. Paul's day had inherited a revival of philosophy, and was a home of culture so much as to induce a rivalry with Athens herself. But it was not in an atmosphere of intellectual ambition that the Apostle's ministry was carried on. It was a wisdom of the world, worldly ; brilliant yet pretentious, that led men no nearer to solving the deeper problems of life.—A. TETLEY.

Corinth was a place of great mental activity, as well as of commercial and manufacturing enterprise. Its wealth was so celebrated as to be proverbial ; so were the vice and profligacy of its inhabitants. The worship of Venus here was attended with shameful licentiousness. St. Paul's first residence at Corinth continued for a year and six months, and the circumstances, which occurred during the course of it, are related at some length (Acts xviii. 1-18). St. Paul had recently passed through Macedonia. He came to Corinth from Athens ; shortly after his arrival Silas and Timotheus came from Macedonia and rejoined him. It was at Corinth that the Apostle first became acquainted with Aquila and Priscilla—and shortly after his departure Apollos came to this city from Ephesus. There were many Jewish converts in the Corinthian Church, though it would appear (1 Cor. xii. 2) that the Gentiles predominated.—J. S. HOWSON.

THE STUDY BIBLE

CALLED TO BE SAINTS

Called to be saints.

1 Cor. I. 2.

TO be a saint is always
to make God our end.

F. W. FABER.

By saints we understand all who welcome, appropriate, and show forth in any way the gifts of the Spirit.

B. F. WESTCOTT.

The idea of "holiness" in the New Testament is essentially this: that every Christian man belongs to God, and is always engaged in the service of God, with all his powers and all his possessions, in every moment of his life and wherever he is. That is the central idea of "holiness," round which other ideas have been associated, ideas which are in all cases, however, secondary and derivative. Every Christian man, as such, is holy in this large meaning of the word. In the first place, "holiness" is the ideal of the Christian profession. The Christian is "called to be a saint." Just as every soldier belongs to his king and country in every moment of his time, in every particle of his strength, in every drop of his blood, so the Christian man belongs to God. He is enlisted in His service.

J. CHAPMAN.

To be a Christian is to be holy by profession; but let us not flatter ourselves with the holiness of our religion if the holiness of our life be not answerable thereto.—QUESNEL.

By holiness, do we not mean something different from virtue? It is not the same as duty. Still less is it the same as religious belief. It is a name for an inner grace of nature, by which, though knowing earthly appetites and worldly passions, it dwells in patient and constant communion with the unseen God.—J. MORLEY.

PARTY CRIES

Each one of you saith, I am of Paul ; and I of Apollos ; and I of Cephas ; and I of Christ.

1 Cor. I. 12.

ST. PAUL places first that section of the Church which called themselves by his name—thus at the outset showing that it is not for the sole purpose of silencing opponents, or from a jealousy of the influence of other teachers, that he writes so strenuously against the disturbances in the Corinthian community. It is the spirit of separation and of faction which he condemns—rebuking it as strongly when it has led to the undue exaltation of his own name, as when it attempted to depreciate his gifts and ministry as compared with those of Apollos or of Cephas. The Pauline party would no doubt have consisted chiefly of those who were the personal converts of the Apostle. Their esteem for him who had been the means of their conversion seems to have been carried to excess in the manner in which it displayed itself. They “judged” and “set at nought” (Rom. xiv. 10) brethren who could not take so essentially spiritual a view of Christianity, but who still clung to some of the outward forms of Judaism.

Apollos was a Jew of Alexandria—“an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures.” To Corinth Apollos brought with him the arts of the rhetorician, and the culture of a Greek philosopher ; and while preaching Christ crucified, these gifts and knowledge rendered him more acceptable than St. Paul had been to a certain class of intellectuals in Corinth. It ought to be remembered that Apollos was in no sense “the founder of a party.” It was the exaggeration and perversion of Apollos’ teaching, by some of the converts,

THE STUDY BIBLE

that really founded the party. To the end he and Paul remained friends.

The third faction in Corinth professed themselves followers of St. Peter—or, as he was always called, “Cephas.” This was the name by which our Lord addressed him, and by this name (and not by his Greek name, Peter) he would have been spoken of by the Apostles and early Christians. This faction of the Corinthian Church still clung to many Jewish ceremonial ideas, from which St. Paul was entirely free. They exalted St. Peter as more worthy of honour than St. Paul, because he had personally been with Christ.

There was still one other party or faction which dared to arrogate to themselves the name of Christ Himself. These over-estimated the importance and value of having seen Christ in the flesh, and despised St. Paul as one who had subsequently joined the Apostolate. Contempt for all human teachers was by them exalted into a virtue. Their greatest sin was that the very name which should have been the common bond of union, the name by the thought and memory of which the Apostle would plead for a restoration of unity, was degraded by them into the exclusive party-badge of a narrow section. Such, briefly, were the four schisms which were rending the Corinthian Church. We might call them : (1) The Party of Liberty (Paul) ; (2) The Intellectual Party (Apollos) ; (3) The Judaising Party (Cephas) ; (4) The Exclusive Party (who said, “ I am of Christ ”).

The mention of the sacred name as a party-cry makes the Apostle burst into the impassioned exclamation, “ Is Christ divided ? ” which might be translated, “ Christ is divided,” that is, Christ, in the communion of the Church, is rent, torn in fragments.—T. SHORE.

A SEARCHING QUESTION

Is Christ divided?

1 Cor. I. 13.

HERE is anger! here is chiding! here are words full of indignation! For whenever instead of proving he interrogates only, his doing so implies a confessed absurdity.—CHRYSOSTOM.

Is Christ (the *Person* of Christ, as the centre and bond of Christian unity—not the *Gospel* of Christ, nor the *Church* of Christ, nor the power of Christ) divided? Has Christ become the property of one party only?

H. ALFORD.

No, His human body was not to be divided; a bone of Him was not to be broken; the seamless garment He wore was not to be rent asunder; nor is His mystical body, the Church, to be torn in pieces by schisms and divisions.—JOHN GILL.

This passage supplies a salutary warning against the erroneous teaching of those who regard Christ only as *one* Teacher among many, instead of being the *Teacher of all*, or who would limit His gifts and graces to their own party, instead of regarding Christ as the Head of the Church Universal in every age and clime.

BP. WORDSWORTH.

To glory in Christ's name amid discords is to rend Him in pieces. Then only doth He reign in us when He is to us the bond of sacred unity.—CALVIN.

What was Paul's method of curing schism? and of making men truly one who had been divided? He directed every eye, and every heart, and every spirit to one object—Jesus Christ, the personal Saviour, the centre and source of unity, in fellowship with whom all men would find their fellowship with each other.

NORMAN MACLEOD.

THE STUDY BIBLE

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

We preach Christ crucified.

1 Cor. I. 23.

I WAS very much impressed the other day in turning to one of the great books by Bishop Lightfoot to find that that able scholar has a very distinct preference for this reading of the sentence, "We preach a Messiah crucified." And in a very fruitful note that he appends to his translation he says that this is not so much a name as an office that is here referred to. The Messiah—the Son of God to be man's deliverer. We have heard that times without number, but what an amazing conception of His love. Think of it—a Messiah crucified! A Messiah is the last being one would have thought would have been crucified. It is an astounding thought. If it does not stagger us it is because we have not been pondering over it sufficiently. God sent His Son into the world to do the work of a Messiah, and that Messiah was crucified. It is the most amazing thing that has ever happened. It is the transcendent tragedy of history.

It is that word "crucified" that is the transcendent thing, the differentiating thing. Leave the word "crucified" out, and you leave out the very heart of the Gospel. Does it seem narrow to preach Christ particularly as a crucified Christ? On the surface it may seem narrow, but it is only seemingly so. An uncrucified Christ could not save; but a Christ crucified has potentialities of salvation beyond all our dreams.

D. T. YOUNG.

The philosopher aspires to explain away all mysteries, to dissolve them into light. It is mystery, on the other hand, which the religious instinct demands and pursues: it is mystery which constitutes the essence of worship,

the power of proselytism. When the cross became the "foolishness" of the cross, it took possession of the masses. And in our own day, those who wish to get rid of the supernatural, to enlighten religion, to economise faith, find themselves deserted, like poets who should declaim against poetry, or women who should decry love.—AMIEL.

For ethical revivals we must first of all have evangelical revivals. We must first of all have the doctrine of the cross before we can hope for moral elevation.

J. H. JOWETT.

If the Atonement were not too wide for our intellectual comprehension, it would be too narrow for our spiritual necessities.—LORD BALFOUR.

When they who seek for signs and wisdom not only receive not the things they ask, but even hear the contrary to what they desire, and then by means of contraries are persuaded, how is not the power of Him that is preached unspeakable? As if to someone tempest-tost and longing for a haven you were to show not a haven but another wilder portion of the sea, and so could make him follow with thankfulness! It is proof of great power and wisdom to convince by means of the things which tell directly against us. Thus the Cross seems to be matter of offence; and yet far from scandalising, it even attracts.—CHRYSOSTOM.

The Jews expected a glorious estate in the world from the Messiah; the Greeks deemed it a foolish and absurd thing to expect life out of death, glory to issue out of such extreme contempt. The Jews called it a revelation of vanity, and the Greeks considered it a doctrine of devils.—J. LEIGH.

To the one the Gospel was a stumbling-block, to the other a laughing-stock.—PERKINS.

THE STUDY BIBLE

THE HEART OF THE APOSTLE

I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

1 Cor. II. 2.

WHEN the converted scholar of Tarsus determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified, he restricted himself to no mean and narrow bounds ; for he placed himself at that focal centre where he could command every radius in the vast infinity of knowledge.

W. ALEXANDER.

He did not affect to appear a fine orator or a deep philosopher, nor insinuate into their minds by a flourish of words or a pompous show of deep reason and extraordinary science and skill. He did not set himself to captivate the ear by fine turns and eloquent expressions, nor to please and entertain the fancy with lofty flights of sublime notions. Neither his speech, nor the wisdom he taught, favoured of human skill : he learnt both in another school. Divine wisdom needed not to be set off with such human ornaments. He came among them, " declaring the testimony of God." He published a Divine revelation, and gave sufficient vouchers for the authority of it, both by its consonancy to ancient predictions, and by present miraculous operations, and there he left the matter. Ornaments of speech and philosophical skill and argument could add no weight to what came recommended by such authority. He preached the truths of Christ in their native dress, with plainness of speech. He laid down the doctrine as the Spirit delivered it ; and left the Spirit, by his external operation in signs and miracles and his internal influences in the hearts of men, to demonstrate the truth of it and procure its reception.—M. HENRY.

He came not wearing syllogisms nor sophisms nor saying anything else than "Christ is crucified." They indeed had ten thousand things to say, and concerning ten thousand things they spake, winding out long courses of words, framing calculations and argumentations, compounding sophisms without end. But he came saying no other thing, and all of them he outstripped ; which is a sign of the power of Him whom he preached.—CHRYSOSTOM.

This was the centre and substance of his preaching, but it is evident that he did not confine himself wholly to this topic, for he preached man's relation to God, as his Creator, Benefactor, and Governor ; the glorious perfections and holy law of God ; the future judgment ; the lost estate of man, regeneration, repentance, conversion, and in short "the whole counsel of God," as the great circumference to that circle of which "Christ crucified" is the centre. But he determined to know "nothing," even among the refined and philosophical Corinthians, which did not elucidate, recommend, evince, or adorn this great doctrine of salvation by the Cross of Christ.—T. SCOTT.

In Paul's view, preaching was to act the part of a herald, to proclaim, not opinions, but the facts and messages as intrusted to him, and to let them speak for themselves. His Gospel was not theory or science, but history, and the glory of this history is that it lives and repeats itself in the Church as a whole and in every member of the Church.—C. F. KLING.

I was acquainted with the Jewish Law, rites, and traditions ; with the heathen poets and philosophers ; but in my preaching I troubled you with none of these ; my whole business was to bring you to a knowledge of Christ.—M. POOLE.

THE STUDY BIBLE

THE DIVINE MYSTERY

We speak God's wisdom in a mystery.

1 Cor. II. 7.

THE mystery with which his thoughts are occupied is the life of God within the soul—that “preparation of the heart of man,” wherein He reveals Himself after a manner not to be apprehended by outward sense or recognised by natural perception. It is the heaven within us, and not the heaven above us, that the Apostle would here unfold to us ; he is concerned, not with such things of God as we have yet to wait for, but with such as we have already received.—DORA GREENWELL.

The glorious words of verse nine are sometimes misinterpreted, as if the Apostle merely meant to exalt the conception of the heavenly world, as of something beyond all power to imagine or to paint. The Apostle meant something infinitely deeper ; the heaven of God is not only that which “eye hath not seen,” but that which eye can *never* see ; its glories are not of that kind at all which can ever stream in forms of beauty on the eye, or pour in melody upon the enraptured ear—not such joys as “the heart of man” can invent or imagine ; it is something which these sensuous organs of ours never can appreciate—bliss of another kind altogether, revealed to the spirit of man by the Spirit of God—joys such as spirit alone can receive. Do you ask what these are ? “The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” That is heaven.

F. W. ROBERTSON.

The *degree* of spiritual discernment possessed by a being taught of the Spirit of God depends much upon the habits of the soul.—G. B. CHEEVER.

THE DIVINE WORK

We are God's fellow-workers.

1 Cor. III. 9.

TO what end does God work? To establish in the human heart and in human society the kingdom of justice and righteousness. If we are co-workers with Him, let us remind ourselves of His ideal, and strive towards His purpose, which is always spiritual, holy, and beautiful. Workers must not despise or disparage one another, or thus treat themselves or their task. Our infidelity, disloyalty, and sloth arrest the Great Worker and His miracles of blessing.—W. L. WATKINSON.

Creation is not finished, but is always proceeding. In this continuous and never-ceasing work man can help or hinder. In the developing of his own personal character man may be a co-worker with God, and in the work of reconciling the world to God.—J. HUNTER.

Man takes in fellow-labourers to carry on his work through indigence and weakness; God does it through power and goodness.—QUESNEL.

Servants or officers of God, co-operating with each other in that great work, which, when it is completed, must be attributed not to them, who are the instruments, but to God, who is the author and accomplisher of all.

J. HAMMOND.

Who would not work hard with such sweet company?

J. TRAPP.

Any whole-hearted work must go forward on the religious assumption that we are in relation to God, and that there is a great ongoing universal plan embracing our little work, and not suffering it to be a worthless fragment. The Divine Purpose is revealed as a Divine Covenant.—H. C. KING.

THE STUDY BIBLE

THE GREAT FOUNDATION

*Other foundation can no man
lay than that which is laid,
which is Jesus Christ.*

1 Cor. III. 11.

"CAN" in this verse does not signify a mere natural power, but a rightful power. No man by any just right or authority can lay any other foundation, can preach any other doctrine.

M. POOLE.

It is for us to build superstructures, not to lay foundations.—THEODORET.

He who denies this foundation, and rejects Him who is the Rock, builds on the sand.—CYRIL.

God has laid a foundation for His own work or building, deep and strong, in Jesus Christ. On this He would have the rest of the work reared up and finished, evenly and symmetrically ; such a work as, by its resemblance to the truth and simplicity of Christ, may stand firmly together and endure.—JOHN COLET.

I should define the "Foundation" to be that which bears all the weight.—J. VAUGHAN.

Let there be no interval between us and Christ ; for if there be any interval immediately we perish. Upon this foundation let us build, and cleave to it, as a branch to the vine. A building stands because it is cemented together ; so the branch by its adherence draws in the life of the tree. Let us not, then, merely keep hold of Christ, as a vine may cling to a building, but let us be joined to Him, for if we stand apart we perish.—CHRYSOSTOM.

There is constant danger of persons mistaking the *doctrine* of Christ for the *person* of Christ. The former is the foundation of a *theology*, the latter of a *life*.

D. W. POOR.

THE GROWING BUILDING

If any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble ; each man's work shall be made manifest : for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire.

1 Cor. III. 12-13.

“PRECIOUS STONES”
are not gems, but grand and costly stones, such as marble. “Hay,” dried grass used to fill up chinks in the walls. “Stubble,” stalks with the ears of corn cut off, and used for making a roof of thatch.

Many ingenious attempts have been made to apply the imagery of this passage in detail to various doctrines or Christian virtues, but it seems best to regard it as broadly and in outline bringing before the reader the two great ideas of permanent and ephemeral work, and the striking contrast between them. The image is taken from what would have met the eye of a traveller in Ephesus where St. Paul now was, or in Corinth where his letter was to be first read. The stately palaces of marble and of granite, with roof and column glittering with gold and silver decorations, and close by these the wretched hovels of the poor and outcast, the walls made of laths of wood, with the interstices stuffed with straw, and a thatched roof above. Then arose before the Apostle's vision the thought of a city being visited by a mighty conflagration, such as desolated Corinth itself in the time of Mummius. The mean structures of perishable wood and straw would be utterly consumed, while, as was actually the case in Corinth, the mighty palaces and temples would stand after the fire had exhausted itself. Thus, says St. Paul, it will be with the work of Christian teachers when the “day of the Lord is revealed in fire.” The

THE STUDY BIBLE

fire of that day will prove and test the quality of each work.

“Revealed in fire.” The day of the coming of the Lord is always thus represented as bursting suddenly with a rush of light and blaze of fire upon the earth. Those who have built well shall have their reward in their work having survived the trial of the fire; those who have built otherwise shall lose everything—their work, which should have remained as their reward, will perish in the fire—and they themselves will be as men who only make good their escape by rushing through a conflagration, leaving all that was theirs to be destroyed. (See Mark ix. 49.)—T. SHORE.

“The Day,” according to most commentators, is “the Day of the Lord,” but other interpretations are “the lapse of time,” “the light of knowledge,” “the day of tribulation.”—H. ALFORD.

The times of such ordeals are called in Scripture “days of the Lord.” They occur for individuals and communities all along the course of human history, and are the preludes to a final “day,” when the value of each man’s work will be revealed.—D. W. POOR.

The Apostle strikes a subtler chord when he speaks of the mixed elements that exist in the best work, of things perfect and imperfect—the gold and the stubble—that jostle one another in human character. Who has not remarked the imperfections of religious men? Who has not seen, as St. Paul saw, that the same man has both gold and stubble in him, that his vision of truth is often limited and vitiated by some error of nature, that his flaws of temper exist side by side with a great apostolic passion for souls, or that his narrowness of sympathy spoils all the admirable grasp of truth which is his?—W. J. DAWSON.

THE TEMPLE OF GOD

Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ?

1 Cor. III. 16.

YE are the spiritual temple of God, built by Him and consecrated to His service.

BP. HALL.

From the thought of grand edifices in general the Apostle goes on to the particular case of a building which is not only splendid, but holy—the temple of God—thus reminding the reader of the Epistle that the rich and valuable metals and stones already mentioned are to represent spiritual attainments, the argument being that as they are “ holy ” by the indwelling of God’s Spirit, therefore they are the temple of God. As God commanded the punishment of death to be inflicted on whoever defiled the actual Temple (Ex. xxviii. 43 ; Lev. xvi. 2), because it was holy unto the Lord, and His presence dwelt there, so they, having the same Spirit in them, were a temple also holy unto the Lord, and God would not leave him unpunished who destroyed or marred this spiritual temple.—T. SHORE.

The body of every saint is a temple far more real than that on Mount Zion, and the heart of every saint is a “ holiest of all ” far more glorious than that of old ; for the Shechinah was but a symbol of the Divine presence, but the Spirit is infinitely beyond a symbol. He is an actual Deity, positively dwelling in the heart, and beatifying it with His own heaven.—D. DAVIES.

Roofs arched with gold and palaces adorned with marble are poor in comparison with that house which the Lord has chosen to be His temple, where dwells the Holy Ghost. Illuminate this house with the light of righteousness.—CYPRIAN.

THE STUDY BIBLE

THE CHURCH'S CHARTER

*All things are yours ; . . .
and ye are Christ's ; and
Christ is God's.*

1 Cor. III. 22-23.

CHRIST is not *yours* in the sense in which all things are, not made for and subserving you, but you are His, and even that does not reach the highest possession. He possesses you not for Himself ; but Christ Himself is God's.—H. ALFORD.

This is an epitome of the Church's grand grant or charter. A Christian hath interest in, and right to, all these things.—J. TRAPP.

The Christian is " Creation's heir."

F. W. ROBERTSON.

Life is the Christian's in a far higher and fuller sense than it is the worldly man's, since he enjoys it on a far higher level of blessedness, and uses it in a much nobler cause. Even *death* is his, since, though for a moment it triumphs over him, in the end he triumphs over it, and, while he seems to yield to it, he treads it under his feet. It is the portal to life.

A. W. THOROLD.

Thine are not only all the former and present but also all the future ; thine the new heaven and the new earth ; thine all the promises and their glorious fulfilment ; thine all the battles, and, therefore, also the coming final one between light and darkness, and the mighty victory of light, eternal peace, the unending rest of the people of God ! Thine are the angels and all the blessed in the New Jerusalem ; thine all the glory of God and Christ in the world of light ; for thee shine all the stars in this life and the next ; for thee are rising the enduring mansions of the heavenly home.

T. CHRISTLIEB.

STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES

Stewards of the mysteries of God.

1 Cor. IV. 1.

WE know that in later times mysteries became in the Eastern Church the technical name for what the

Western Church called the Sacraments. But there is little, if any, trace of that meaning of the word in the New Testament. Mysteries there are, truths which have been hitherto unknown, but are now communicated. They are doctrines to be revealed, manifested, spoken, published, not rites to be administered. The doctrines of the call of the Gentiles to equal privileges with the Jews and the consequent universality of the Church, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, all that centres round the transcendent person of Christ, these are the mysteries of the New Testament. By dispensing these as good stewards the Christian teachers are to bring the world "to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The language of St. Paul is an echo of the words of Jesus Himself when, answering the inquiry of His disciples why He spake in parables unto the multitudes, He told them, "because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven."—W. INCE.

The stewardship consists in preserving and administering the truth revealed through preaching and teaching. The stress here is not to be laid upon the pre-eminence enjoyed by the steward, but upon the responsibility accompanying the goods entrusted.

NEANDER.

As stewards of the Gospel treasures they have the right to open them.—STARKE.

THE STUDY BIBLE

CONCERNING THE BODY

Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body.

1 Cor. VI. 19-20.

(Rom. vi. 17-18), of the law and its curse (Gal. iii.) and of Satan (Col. i. 13).—H. ALFORD.

In its doctrine concerning the body Christianity avoids two opposite extremes. It neither disparages it as worthless and contemptible, after the fashion of some ancient philosophers, nor idolises it into an object of supreme regard and care, as do some moderns. Regarding it as essential to the perfection of our humanity, and as a needful organ of the Spirit, Christianity gives the body a share in Christ's redemptive work, unites it to Him for sanctification here and for glorification hereafter. It thus makes it a member of Christ's mystical body, to be controlled and regulated by His Spirit. At the same time it imparts to it the character of a Divine Temple which we have to keep from defilement and suited for the service and worship of God. So far, therefore, from being at liberty to despise or abuse the body or to set up its welfare and claims in antagonism with those of the Spirit, our obligations to Christ demand that we unite it with the soul in one general system of spiritual edification and culture, yield its members as instruments of righteousness, and glorify God in it.—D. W. POOR.

STUMBLING-BLOCKS

If meat maketh my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I make not my brother to stumble.

1 Cor. VIII. 13.

A CHRISTIAN through faith becomes free from all men, but through love is made the servant of all.

LUTHER.

We must stand unchangeably resolved neither to give offence carelessly nor to take offence causelessly.—J. TRAPP.

How possible it is to mix together the vigour of a masculine and manly intellect with the tenderness and charity which is taught by the gospel of Christ! No man ever breathed so freely when on earth the air and atmosphere of heaven as the Apostle Paul; no man ever soared so high above all prejudices, narrowness, littlenesses, scruples as he; and yet no man ever bound himself as Paul bound himself to the ignorance, the scruples, the prejudices of his brethren. So that what in other cases was infirmity, imbecility, and superstition, gathered round it in his case the pure, high spirit of Christian charity and Christian delicacy. Match us if you can with one sentence so sublime, so noble, as this single, glorious sentence of his, in which he asserts the rights of Christian conscience above the claims of Christian liberty: "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

F. W. ROBERTSON.

If we did more diligently attend to these things, we should avoid sinning against our brethren and wounding their weak conscience that we might not sin against Christ; our brethren that are among us, for whom Christ died, often perishing, not only by our knowledge,

THE STUDY BIBLE

but by many other ways and things, in which things we, sinning against Christ, shall suffer punishment ; the souls of them that perish by us being required of and avenged upon us.—ORIGEN.

The greater our reputation for knowledge and sanctity, the greater mischief we shall do by our influence and example if we turn aside from the holy commandment delivered unto us. Every man should walk so as either to light or lead his brother to heaven.

Persons of an over tender and scrupulous conscience may be very troublesome in a Christian society ; but as this excessive scrupulosity comes from want of more light, more experience, or more judgment, we should bear with them. Though such should often run into ridiculous extremes, yet we must take care that we do not attempt to cure them either with ridicule or wrath. Extremes generally beget extremes ; and such persons require the most judicious treatment, else they will soon be stumbled and turned out of the way. We should be very careful lest in using what is called Christian liberty we occasion their fall ; and for our own sake we must take heed that we do not denominate sinful indulgences, Christian liberties.

Though we are bound to take heed that we put not a stumbling-block in the way of a weak brother, yet if such a brother be stumbled at any part of our conduct which is not blameable in itself, but of which he may have taken a wrong view, we are not answerable for the consequences. We are called to walk by the testimony of God ; not according to the measure of any man's conscience, how sincere soever he may be.

A. CLARKE.

St. Paul had such a value for the soul of a man, that he would willingly deny himself in a matter of liberty,

and forbear any particular food, which he might have lawfully eaten, and might like to eat, rather than lay a stumbling-block in a weak brother's way, and occasion him to sin by following his example, without being clear in his mind whether it were lawful or no. We should be very tender of doing anything that may be an occasion of stumbling to others, though it may be innocent in itself. Liberty is valuable, but the weakness of a brother should induce, and sometimes bind, us to waive it. We must not rigorously claim or use our own rights, to the hurt and ruin of a brother's soul, and so to the injury of our Redeemer, who died for him. When it is certainly foreseen that my doing what I may forbear will occasion a fellow-Christian to do what he ought to forbear, I shall offend, or lay a stumbling-block in his way; which to do is a sin, however lawful the thing itself be which is done. And if we must be so careful not to occasion other men's sins, how careful should we be to avoid sin in ourselves? If we must not endanger other men's souls, how much should we be concerned not to destroy our own?—M. HENRY.

But while it is our imperative duty to obey conscience as it is, it is our business to do all we can to enlighten and instruct it in the truth. This private monitor, like the watch we carry, may become deranged, and need to be regulated. And this standard is the sun of righteousness as it shines upon us through the Divine Word and Spirit.—D. W. POOR.

He who refuses a small condescension to promote the salvation of a member of Christ, has undoubtedly forgotten what his Saviour has done and suffered for him. That person who is not concerned that his brother should perish is in danger of perishing himself.

QUESNEL.

THE STUDY BIBLE

THE CHRISTIAN RACE

So run, that ye may attain.

1 Cor. IX. 24.

THE illustration which follows refers to these Isthmian games (so called from their taking place in the isthmus where Corinth stood) with which the reader would be familiar. These, like the other games of Greece—the Olympian, Pythian, and Nemean—included every form of athletic exercise, and stood on an entirely different footing from anything of the kind in modern times. For the Greek, these contests were great national and religious festivals. None but freemen could enter the lists, and they only after they had satisfied the appointed officers that they had for ten months undergone the necessary preliminary training. For thirty days previous to the contest the candidates had to attend the exercises at the gymnasium, and only after the fulfilment of these conditions were they allowed, when the time arrived, to contend in the sight of assembled Greece. Proclamation was made of the name and country of each competitor by a herald. The victor was crowned with a garland of pine leaves or ivy. The family of the conqueror was honoured by his victory, and when he returned to his native town he would enter it through a breach in the walls, the object of this being to symbolise that for a town which was honoured with such a citizen no walls of defence were needful (Plutarch). Pindar, or some other great poet, would immortalise the victorious hero's name in his verse, and in all future festivals the foremost seats would be occupied by the heroes of former contests.—T. SHORE.

Are not cunning and unjust men like those racers who run well at the beginning, but who in the end become ridiculous and run off without any reward?—PLATO.

THE CHRISTIAN ATHLETE

I therefore so run, as not uncertainly ; so fight I, as not beating the air.

1 Cor. IX. 26.

I RUN straight for the goal.
H. MEYER.

The Apostle represents himself as engaged in an actual fight, not in a sham fight, as a preparation for the real conflict. He is in the very heat of the battle.—C. F. KLING.

St. Paul is claiming human energy for its highest work. He has gone on and up till he has gained great visions of what man may be and do. His heart is glowing with the prospect of sublime achievement. Then he looks around and listens. He hears the sound of human activity on every side. The figure of the race-course rises before him. He sees the eager competitors first training themselves with painful self-control, and then flinging themselves into the struggle and straining every effort for a crown of leaves. "There is no lack of energy," he seems to say. The world has force enough, if only we can have it for the highest purposes. If only self-restraint and enthusiasm and skill and fiery zeal can be poured into these more worthy channels. If only we can run the perfect race as these men run in the racecourse whose prize is this laurel, which will fade before the morning. It is a longing which has come to the minds of all enthusiasts who craved for the one thing which, in all the world, seemed precious to them, that which they saw men freely giving to less precious things. There is no lack of force. Never did men feel the abundance of unused and misused force as it is felt to-day. Nowhere is the student of the future met by the awful problem of a dead world, an unborn clod or a burnt-out cinder to be

THE STUDY BIBLE

kindled into life. The life is here. Only so often it plays instead of working, and loiters instead of running, and is eager not about the greatest but about the least. Where is the noisy energy and great zeal to-day? It is where men are seeking money, not where men are seeking truth. It is where men are pursuing selfish ambitions, not where they are labouring for the common good. It is where the things of the flesh, not the things of the Spirit, are the prize.—P. BROOKS.

I know what I aim at, and how to aim at it. He who runs with a clear aim looks straight forward to the goal, and makes it his only object, he casts away every encumbrance, and is indifferent to what the bystanders say, and sometimes even a fall serves only to rouse him the more. Paul adds the pugilistic contest to the race, in preference to the other kinds of contest.—BENGEL.

If an athlete, in order to put himself in breath, ere he begins the contest, should fight with an imaginary antagonist, and deal out lusty fisty cuffs and kicks in the air, as if he were giving them to his opponents, will the umpire immediately by the public crier proclaim him invincible.—LUCIAN.

I am in the same race with you, and running to the same mark, and for the same prize. I give you no other counsel than I myself take; I endeavour so to live as I may not be uncertain whether I please God or shall reach my goal. I am also a fellow-soldier with you, fighting against sin. I make it my great business so to fight that I get the advantage. I do not throw stones against the wind, nor beat the air with my staff. It is not every running, nor every fighting, that will bring a man to heaven; it must be a running with all our might, and continuing until the race ends; and the fighting must be to the finish too.—M. POOLE.

THE NEAR ANTAGONIST

*I buffet my body, and bring
it into bondage.*

1 Cor. IX. 27.

and blue.—H. ALFORD.

I cover my body with bruises.—E. M. GOULBURN.

The body is of a slavish nature, and must be held
hard under.—J. TRAPP.

Compelling to subjection, as we would force a
slave to grind at the mill. The Apostle uses two words
for emphasis, one meaning, to keep under, and the other,
to bring into subjection. The former is taken from a
champion wrestler who striveth for the mastery, and
hath reference to the twenty-fifth verse, where mention
is made of men that strive for the mastery. The latter
hath reference to masters, that prudently keep their
slaves in order, especially when they wax insolent or
wanton. By the body he means the old man, which is
called the body of sin (Rom. vi. 6).—J. LEIGH.

By these words the Apostle means the mortification
of his flesh by the privations, labours, and sufferings
endured in consequence of his devotion to his calling.

OSIANDER.

Maintain this sound and salutary way of living,
so far only to indulge the body, as to preserve it in good
health. Despise those superfluities which needless
labour acquires by way of ornament or credit. Think
there is nothing admirable in thee but the soul.—SENECA.

He that can oppress and get down his adversary is
called good at wrestling ; he that can strike him down
with his fists is an able boxer ; he that is good at both
these is “ the all powerful.”—ARISTOTLE.

THE STUDY BIBLE

THE WAY OF ESCAPE

There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear : but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it.

1 Cor. X. 13.

THE first step to victory is to believe that the battle need not be lost.—H. BLACK.

Divine love tempers life's fierce tyranny. The hand of God limits and regulates the severities of life, so that they may serve and not destroy us. Our life is not all conflict with nature. There are gracious hours in which the discords are drowned in music, and the

doors opening into the picture-gallery and library are doors of hope and salvation. By the alternations and dispositions of the trials which exercise us the Divine government softens the severity of life. The rigour of existence is abated by domesticity and sympathy. Marvellously in all kinds of ways does the grace of God assert itself in softening the severity that threatens utterly to overwhelm us.—W. L. WATKINSON.

This is the doctrine we are to learn from the history of the Israelites. God is still with us, we are never to be discouraged in the time of trial, nor doubt of His protection. If there is a sea on one side, and a host of Egyptians on the other, and there seems no way to escape, the waters shall be divided and the Egyptians overthrown. If there is neither bread nor water in appearance, some improbable causes shall give us a supply of both ; some flinty stone shall become a springing well, and the heavens above shall give us meat enough. If there is no path through the desert a pillar of light shall point out the way.—JONES OF NAYLAND.

THE CUP OF BLESSING

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body : for we all partake of the one bread.

1 Cor. X. 16-17.

ST. PAUL here plainly teaches us, that these sacred signs make those who use them to have communion with Christ crucified. The partaking of the bread and of the cup is the means that God hath appointed for our partaking of the benefits of Christ's body that was broken, and of His blood that was shed for us.

It enters us into a league of friendship with Him, as not all the powers of earth and hell can dissolve, unless we ourselves be traitors to ourselves.

ABP. SHARP.

He who drinks of this cup is a partaker of the blood of Christ ; so they who eat. Now, he who is a partaker of the blood and body of Christ is also a partaker of the sacrifice that was offered on the cross, a partaker, in short, of Christ himself. He proves that the cup and the bread are the communion ; for the bread by itself does not make them that eat it become one body ; but the bread does so, in so far as it is communion, it is such bread as is broken, and carries with it (implied in the participation of it) the communion of the body of Christ.—BENGEL.

The argument of the Apostle is, that as the Gentiles have fellowship with the idols in their feasts, so Christians have communion with Christ at His holy table.

W. BURKITT.

None is excluded who excludeth not himself ; if any one feel himself insecure, doubtful about his state,

THE STUDY BIBLE

wish himself otherwise, wish to move onward towards heaven, but know not how, let him come, let him not wait as if he must be fitter to come ; “ God filleth the hungry, and the rich He sendeth empty away ” ; we come here, not with the riches of our own works, but with our emptiness, and desiring of Him the riches of His grace. He asketh but a penitent, earnest heart, conscious of its own weakness and desiring His strength ; it is He who calleth thee ; bind thyself fast to Him ; shrink not ; confess to Him thy unworthiness, and desire, if so be, to “ touch the hem of His garment, He will make thee whole ” ; mistrust thyself, and trust Him ; ask of Him faith and He will give it to thee, and to thy faith He will give thee the pledge of everlasting life. He will give thee the wedding-garment for His feast.—E. B. PUSEY.

It appears from this passage that the Lord's Supper has been instituted as a real communion, and not merely as a symbol. The “ body of Christ,” of course, is to be conceived of spiritually. The mediating thought between the statement that the sacrament of the Supper communicates the body and blood of our Lord and the statement that the Church is the body of our Lord is this—that individuals by celebrating the Supper come into communion with each other.—NEANDER.

The paschal cup was styled by the Jews “ the cup of blessing ” because they sanctified it, i.e. they gave thanks for it in these words : “ Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, the King of the World, who hast created the fruit of the vine ” ; and also being styled “ the cup of blessing of the table,” it cannot reasonably be doubted that the Eucharistical cup was so called for the same reason, and that it was sanctified or consecrated by thanksgiving to God for it.—BP. PATRICK.

THE SANCTIFIED LIFE

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

1 Cor. X. 31.

IT is in the highest degree just to consider in all our words and actions whether they tend to the glory of God.

BENGEL.

This is the art of keeping the heart spiritual in all affairs, yea of spiritualising the affairs themselves in their use that in themselves are earthly. This is the elixir that turns lower metal into gold, the meaner actions of this life, in a Christian's hands, into holy offerings unto God.—LUTHER.

If, instead of prescribing to ourselves indifferent actions or duties, we apply a good intention to all our most indifferent actions, we make our very existence one continued act of obedience, we turn our diversions and amusements to our eternal advantage, and are pleasing Him (whom we are made to please) in all the circumstances and occurrences of life. It is this excellent frame of mind, this holy officiousness (if I may be allowed to call it such), which is recommended to us by the Apostle in that uncommon precept, wherein he directs us to propose to ourselves the glory of our Creator in all our most indifferent actions, “whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do.”—ADDISON.

We may safely say, then, that when we are performing the duties of the household we are serving God. And now let us look at eating and drinking, in which we spend much of our time (we include not only while we sit at table, but the time which is given to preparing our food). In that life where we hunger no more, neither thirst any more, much time may be taken for other things. But is it possible that while we are eating and

THE STUDY BIBLE

drinking we may be serving God ? The Apostle, as if he felt that this element of our life was closely related to the lower life, puts his finger upon it and says, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." If we eat and drink, not to gratify the palate, but to make our bodies strong and efficient for all the higher purposes of God, with due regard to those tastes which God, in His goodness, has given us to turn necessity into delight, then while we are eating and drinking we are serving God and glorifying Him, or we are so made that our nature needs to be repaired in this way from time to time, and it is "God who hath made us, and not we ourselves."

Again, is it possible that while we are enjoying ourselves we are serving God ? We are so made that we must have pleasures. We may call them by the graver name of "recreations" or the lighter name of "amusements." It does not matter. Pleasure we must have. It is as necessary to us as food. "All work and no play . . ."—you know the rest ; and it applies to men as well as to boys. And it is God who has made us so. If, then, we are only taking a reasonably proportionate amount of pleasure, which is pure in itself and free from associations of evil, while we are enjoying ourselves we are serving God, and His smile is upon us, just as we smile at our children at their pleasure.—J. CHAPMAN.

If this is your principle of action, and if you are zealous for the honour of God, you will not feel any indignation that the exercise of your liberty is to be regulated and controlled by considerations of regard for the conscience of your brother, redeemed by Christ. You will glorify God by restraining yourself in the exercise of your liberty.—BP. WORDSWORTH.

THE CONSECRATION OF MEMORY

This do in remembrance of me.

1 Cor. XI. 24.

THIS is the consecration of memory. Whatever else the sacrament may be, it is, as it is called in the English Prayer Book, "a perpetual memory," or memorial. The account of the Last Supper is a part of the gospel story, which you may be quite sure is absolutely and unquestionably quite historical, never contested by anyone. It is the most authentic monument of our Saviour's life and death, and it carries with it, more or less, the whole history of the Passion, and the whole mind of Jesus Christ as represented therein. Remember this, and you will remember quite enough to reconstruct the essentials of Christianity. For, further, this is why the Lord's Supper is so peculiarly Christian, and so peculiarly good for us, that by our serious frame of mind, by our union with each other, by our gratitude, by our memory, it brings before us the truth, that the main object of the religion of Jesus Christ is to make us like Him.

DEAN STANLEY.

This sacrament is to refresh your memories of the covenant, which Christ established with you. Reflect that you neither eat nor drink to sustain the body, but to proclaim Christ's death, reviving in it your memories, which is to last as long as He shall defer His second coming. The reason why Christ desired that His death should be imprinted in our memories is to remedy our weakness. He well knew that the human mind is such, that if it have not whereupon to found its faith, words fail to give it assurance; and that for this reason, He, being desirous to give His people's minds assurance, desires that they should keep His death ever fresh in

THE STUDY BIBLE

their memories, in order that they may thus have wherein and whereupon to base their faith. The Gospel affirms to us that God has pardoned us, and shows us the Covenant of the life blood of Christ, in order that, retaining it ever fresh in our memories, we should base our faith upon it, and that thus we might live in confidence, sure of our justification, of our resurrection, and of eternal life.—JUAN DE VALDÉS.

As the Passover was for a memorial of the deliverance wrought by God, to be kept “throughout your generations,” so the Eucharist is a memorial of the deliverance wrought by Christ’s death “till He come.” Commemoration ceases when He who is commemorated returns. Meanwhile the Eucharist is the Church’s consolation for the Lord’s withdrawal from sight. It links the Second Advent to the first by keeping both in mind. Like the dramatic actions of the Hebrew prophets, it illustrates, and emphasises, and impresses on the memory a special proof of God’s care for His people. It is Christ’s last and supreme parable; a parable not merely told but acted by Himself. He sets forth His own death, and shows that those who would profit by it must make it their own by faith and love.

A. PLUMMER.

In His own Supper our Lord imparts Himself wholly to us, that He may transform us wholly to Himself, and make us members together with Him; that so there may be one *body*, consisting of Himself as the Head and ourselves as its proper members, wholly possessing and possessed by God. In this way we are partakers of His death, and partakers of His life also, that being now dead in Him, we may live again from the dead in Him. Thus it comes that to sup with the Lord is to die with Him.—JOHN COLET.

TILL HE COME

*As often as ye eat this bread,
and drink the cup, ye proclaim
the Lord's death till he come.*

1 Cor. XI. 26.

THE rite was not a memorial of death simply, but of death conquered by life. The seal of the efficacy of the death of Christ was given in the

Resurrection, and the limit of the commemoration of His Passion was looked for in His return.—B. F. WESTCOTT.

The memorial of the cross is also the promise of the glory ; and they who at the Lord's table on earth love to show forth their *Lord's death till He come* are surely more likely than others to be looking forward to the glorious moment when they will be called to sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb.—A. W. THOROLD.

Notice here the many words which are connected with " the Lord " by the Apostle : The Lord's *body*, ver. 29 ; the Lord's *blood*, ver. 27 ; the Lord's *bread*, ver. 27 ; the Lord's *cup*, ver. 27 ; the Lord's *death*, ver. 26 ; the Lord's *supper*, ver. 20. For in this ordinance Christ is all and in all ; everything here speaks of Jesus, and He speaks in everything ; He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.—H. BONAR.

The Greek word for " ye show " (A.V.) is that used for making a public oral proclamation. The passage implies that when the bread and wine were consecrated to this sacred use, there was an oral declaration made.—T. SHORE.

He does not say, Ye repeat the sacrifice of Christ's death ; nor does he say, Ye continue the sacrifice of Christ's death ; but he says, " Ye proclaim Christ's death."—BP. WORDSWORTH.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

*There are diversities of gifts,
but the same Spirit.*

1 Cor. XII. 4.

THE Apostle replies to inquiries regarding the comparative value and importance of certain spiritual gifts.

In this early age the Church was full of the Divine energy of spiritual youth. From the indwelling Spirit of God resulted certain marvellous "gifts," some of which ceased with the apostolic age—some of which seem to have lingered for centuries, even to our own day—declaring themselves intermittently in times of profound religious awakening. The party spirit with which the Corinthian Church seems to have been saturated naturally led to diverse views as to the relative importance of certain of these gifts—some were unduly exalted, some unduly depreciated. The following division of the gifts which are here mentioned is, perhaps, the best approach to a classification which can be made :

I. Gifts which have reference to intellectual power.

- (1) The word of wisdom.
- (2) The word of knowledge.

II. Gifts which depend upon special energy of faith.

- (1) The faith itself.
- (2) Operating in deeds.
 - (a) Healings.
 - (b) Miracles.
- (3) Operating in words, as in prophetic utterances.
- (4) Operating in distinguishing true and false spirits.

III. Gifts which relate to tongues.

(1) Speaking with tongues.

(2) Interpreting tongues.

The "wisdom" and the "knowledge" differ, in that the former expresses the deep spiritual insight into spiritual truth which some possess, the latter the intellectual appreciation of Christian doctrine, which is not so profound as the former, and which as the man passes into the spiritual state will vanish away. In the Greek "the word of wisdom" is said to be given by the Spirit; "the word of knowledge" *according to* the Spirit; and "the faith and gift of healing" *in* the Spirit. By the use of this variety of expression the Apostle probably means to indicate the variety of methods of operation of the Spirit, as well as the diversity of the gifts which He lavishes.

The Spirit divideth to every man as He wills, but He wills to give to each the best gift that each desires and is capable of receiving. The receptivity which comes with earnest and practical desire is in the case of each individual the determining cause as to what gift the Spirit will give. The last sentence, "And yet show I unto you a more excellent way," ought to form the opening clause of the next chapter. The "more excellent way" is not some gift to be desired to the exclusion of the other gifts, but a more excellent way of striving for those gifts. You are not to strive for any one gift because it is more highly esteemed, or because it is more apparently useful, or because it is more easily attained. That which will consecrate every struggle for attainment and every gift when attained is *Love*.—T. SHORE.

The Corinthians imagined they could *ascend to*

THE STUDY BIBLE

heaven by a manifestation of spiritual gifts, and they despised the way of charity as *too lowly* for their aspirations.—BP. WORDSWORTH.

All that is sweetest and noblest in music, painting, architecture, all that is truest and best in poetry, literature, science, comes from the Father of Lights. “There is one body”—the universe—and “one spirit”—the Divine evolving intelligence within it. Humanity is the body of God, the Church is the heart of that body, and we are the Church. We, each one of us personally, are possessors of some gift, some conviction, some insight, some facility, some advantage, some quality of heart, which is ours in trust for the body. Our gift is the measure of our responsibility and the obligation of our serviceableness to the race. Be careful lest in the haste and fret and selfishness of life you fail to minister your gifts one to another as good stewards of the mysteries of God. Be appreciative, tolerant, receptive towards your brother’s gift, though you may be unable to see exactly how it fits in with your own mode of acting and thinking.

CANON WILBERFORCE.

God appoints to every one of His creatures a separate mission ; and if they discharge it honourably, if they quit themselves like men, and faithfully follow the light which is in them, withdrawing from it all cold and quenching influence, there will assuredly come of it such burning as in its appointed mode and measure shall shine before men, and be of service, constant and holy.—RUSKIN.

We may notice that the greater gifts consisted in *the inspired exercise of the conscious faculties*, in which culture and diligence would be useful accessories.—H. ALFORD.

THE HYMN OF LOVE

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal.

1 Cor. XIII. 1.

PAUL here exhibits to us love after the manner of a jeweller handling the most precious gem of his cabinet, turning it on every side, showing it in varied lights,

and holding it up to view in a way best fitted to awaken desire for its possession.—C. F. KLING.

On each side of this chapter the tumult of argument and remonstrance still rages ; but within it all is calm ; the sentences move in almost rhythmical melody ; the imagery unfolds itself in almost dramatic propriety ; the language arranges itself with almost rhetorical accuracy. We can imagine how the Apostle's amanuensis must have paused to look up in his master's face at the sudden change of his style of dictation, and seen his countenance lighted up as it had been the face of an angel, as the sublime vision of Divine perfection passed before him.—DEAN STANLEY.

All extraordinary gifts are valueless without love ; and love can exist in the absence of all extraordinary gifts. It is time, however, that we should set ourselves seriously to inquire what this indispensable virtue really is. We may best begin, perhaps, by clearing away some counterfeits which pass current among us. Love is not to be confused with what Bishop Butler calls " That easiness of temper which, with peculiar propriety, is expressed by the word good-humour, and is a sort of benevolent instinct left to itself, without the direction of our judgment." Such a natural kindness is not incompatible with a selfish character, and it readily degenerates into an unconscious insincerity. Nor may

THE STUDY BIBLE

we identify love with that spirit of tolerance which is, indeed, akin to it and commonly goes with it.

“Charity,” is, so to say, of Christian coinage. In Archbishop Trench’s phrase, “*agape* is a word born within the bosom of revealed religion.” We are assured that “there is no trace of it in any heathen writer whatever, and as little in Philo or Josephus.” The ancients, indeed, could frame a noble theory of the claim of man as such upon the love of every man; and friendship never found a worthier recognition than among them. Take, for example, the language of the Stoic, Seneca. “You must live for another,” he writes, “if you would live for yourself.” “I will so live,” he says elsewhere, “as if I knew that I was born for others, and will give thanks to nature on this score.” From the writings of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius it would be an easy task to multiply such evangelical aphorisms; and yet it remains true that *agape*, the word and the thing, had no place in that magnanimous stoicism. We are thrown back on the gospels for the knowledge we are seeking. There is love to be seen at work; there is love visibly paramount in a human character; and unquestionably prevailing in a human life. The theological creed of the religion of love is but a summary of the impression made by the life of Jesus on those who beheld it.

Christian love, therefore, includes three elements directly drawn from the faith of the incarnation. Reverence, hopefulness, and sacrifice. These are the constituents of the indispensable Christian virtue; and these serve as tests by which that virtue may be discovered, and not less as hints helping to determine its rightful exercise. Reverence, hopefulness, sacrifice, put a difference between Christian love and the cheap

sentiment which too easily passes for it among us ; and all these must find their daily sustenance where they had their historic source, in the “ *Imitatio Christi*,” to which we are all pledged.—H. HENSLEY HENSON.

Paul was not the Apostle of Love ; he was the Apostle of Faith. His life-work was to bring out the function and the value of faith ; and a eulogy on faith, in any part of his writings, would have occasioned no surprise. St. John was the Apostle of Love ; and it is in his writing that we should have expected the eulogy on love. And yet it is from St. Paul that there has come love’s immortal eulogy. Is it not an evidence of how completely inspiration was able to lift those into whom it entered above, what you might call, the prejudices of their temperament, and even of their work ?—J. STALKER.

Paul saith that love is the mother of all good things, and prefers it to miracles and all other gifts. For as where there are vests and sandals of gold we require also some other garment whereby to distinguish the king ; but if we see the purple and the diadem we require not to see any other sign of his royalty ; just so here likewise, when the diadem of love is upon our head it is enough to point out the genuine disciple of Christ, not to ourselves only, but also to the unbelievers.—CHRYSOSTOM.

Nothing is more common than to find even those who deny the authority of the Holy Scriptures, yet affirming, “ This is my religion—that which is described in the thirteenth chapter of Corinthians.” A Jew, a Spanish physician, settled in Savannah, used to say, with great earnestness, “ I wish the thirteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians were wrote in letters of gold.” He judged that this single chapter contained the whole of true religion.—J. WESLEY.

THE STUDY BIBLE

HEAD AND HEART

*If I have the gift of prophecy,
and know all mysteries and
all knowledge ; and if I have
all faith, so as to remove
mountains, but have not love,
I am nothing.*

1 Cor. XIII. 2.

THERE is a Divine instinct within us which decides that pre-eminence—using the term in its final sense—shall not be given to even intellectual strength and prowess.

J. SMETHAM.

If I have the gift of prophecy, whereby I know all the secret senses of the Scriptures of God (if so much have chanced to any one man to understand all), yea, if therewith be joined a perfect knowledge of all learning, and I have finally so strong a faith that I could with the same move mountains out of their places and lack charity, in vain have I the other.—ERASMUS.

By all faith he meaneth not all kinds of faith, but all measure of it in working miracles ; some had faith to do some miracles and not others. The Apostle speaketh that if he had such a miraculous faith, and had not love, it were nothing.—J. LEIGH.

A clear and deep head is of no signification without a benevolent and charitable heart. And the most wonder-working faith, to which nothing in a manner is impossible, is itself nothing without charity. Moving mountains is a great achievement, but in God's account charity is of much greater worth.—M. HENRY.

Consider how in brief he comprehended all gifts when he named prophecy and faith ; for miracles are either in words or deeds.—CHRYSOSTOM.

Learning is a poor ladder compared with love. It can reach what knowledge can never see, and enter where knowledge dare not go.—J. FEATHERSTONE.

HAND AND HEART

If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

1 Cor. XIII. 3.

of God abiding in the Christian. Surely we cannot seriously misconceive such teachings if, for the convenience of practical life, we treat almsgiving as the synonym of the charity it seems to express, the sufficient demonstration of love in the liberal giver's heart.

"How is it possible," asks St. Chrysostom, very fairly, "that one who gives all his goods to feed the poor can be wanting in charity? I grant" (he continues) "he that is ready to be burned, and hath the gifts, may possibly not have charity; but he who not only gives his goods, but even distributes them in morsels; how hath he not charity?" St. Chrysostom emphasises the suggestive phrase of St. Paul. The word in the original indicates careful and almost solicitous action. The lexicons explain it to mean much more than our English equivalent, "bestow." It rather suggests the action of a nurse feeding a child by putting little bits into its mouth. Coleridge's note brings out the force of the Greek word; "The true and most significant sense is, 'Though I dole away in mouthfuls all my property or estates.'" "Who," Chrysostom asks, "that has witnessed the almsgiving in a monastery or the court of a Sicilian bishop's or archbishop's palace, where immense revenues are syringed away in farthings to herds of beggars, but must feel the force of the

THE STUDY BIBLE

Apostle's half-satirical word ? ” Personally, I prefer to think with St. Chrysostom that St. Paul designs to indicate the highest kind of almsgiving, that, namely, which involves individual attention and personal exertion. “ He said not ‘ give,’ but ‘ distribute in morsels,’ so that to the expense may be added the ministering also with all care.” Must, then, we conclude that the Apostle is drawing an impossible situation in order to add force to his rhetorical challenge, or is it, indeed, the case that serious almsgiving, lavish in extent and laboriously conscientious in method, can proceed without love ? Again St. Chrysostom seems to give the true decision. St. Paul's meaning is, he says, “ For those who give to be also joined closely to those who receive, and not merely to give without sympathy, but in pity and condescension, bowing down and grieving with the needy. For, therefore, also hath almsgiving been enacted by God ; since God might have nourished the poor as well without this, but that He might bind us together unto charity, and that we might be thoroughly fervent towards each other. He commanded them to be nourished by us.”—H. H. HENSON.

I hold not so narrow a conceit of this virtue, charity, as to conceive that to give alms is only to be charitable or think a piece of liberality can comprehend the total of charity ; divinity hath wisely divided the act thereof into many branches, and hath taught us in this narrow way many paths unto goodness ; as many ways as we may do good, so many ways we may be charitable ; there are infirmities not only of body, but of soul and fortunes, which do require the merciful hand of our abilities.—T. BROWN.

It is not the suffering but the reason for it that makes the martyr.—CYPRIAN.

THE LIFE OF LOVE

Love suffereth long, and is kind ; love envieth not ; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil ; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

1 Cor. XIII. 4-7.

ones of this world, who never forget their own interests.

AMIEL.

It is not true that love makes all things easy ; it makes us choose what is difficult.—GEORGE ELIOT.

If you want a person's faults go to those who love him. They will not tell you, but they know. And herein lies the magnanimous courage of love, that it endures this knowledge without change.

R. L. STEVENSON.

Love meditates no mischief and suspects no ill.

DEAN STANHOPE.

Charity hath gentleness and sweetness of manners, and like the main beam of a building beareth all things.

J. LEIGH.

As a spark which falls into the sea hurts not the sea, but is itself extinguished, so let anything evil befall the loving soul, and it will soon be destroyed without disquietude.—CHRYSOSTOM.

THE STUDY BIBLE

THE VICTORY OF LOVE

Love never faileth.

1 Cor. XIII. 8.

THE eternal abiding of love when other graces have passed away.—H. ALFORD.

Seeth thou when he put the crown on the arch, and what of all things is peculiar to this gift? For what is “faileth not”? It is not severed, it is not dissolved.

CHRYSOSTOM.

This love never falleth off, because it bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things; and while it does so it cannot fail; it is the means of preserving all other graces; indeed, properly speaking, it includes them all; and all receive their perfection from it.—A. CLARKE.

The word “faileth” is used to denote the fading of flowers, the falling of trees, the dislocation of the limbs, also losing one’s job or being displaced from one’s position. The simple form of the word means “to fall,” as houses, or stars and the like. Mere continuance in use is not the thing meant, nor yet simply that love never fails in its object, but full and unchanging completeness.—C. F. KLING.

It is a permanent and perpetual grace, lasting as eternity.—M. HENRY.

Love is eternally awake, never tired with labour, nor oppressed with affliction, nor discouraged by fear.

THOMAS À KEMPIS.

Love is ever busy with his shuttle, is ever weaving into life’s dull warp bright gorgeous flowers and scenes arcadian.—LONGFELLOW.

Love is old, old as eternity, but not outworn.

BYRON.

Love is the bond which never corrodes.

JOSEPH PARKER.

CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

Now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things.

1 Cor. XIII. 11.

HE who hath not taken leave of the follies of his youth, and in his maturer state scarce got out of that division, disproportionately divideth his days, crowds up the latter part of his life, and leaves two narrow a corner for the age of wisdom.

T. BROWN.

A child asks how to be happy, but a man asks how to serve, how to work, how to do something, how to decide, how to push a resolution through, how to persevere to the end, how to fight it out, how to spend himself. That is "the man"; that is his part, and for this he must ask with reason instead of impulse, with precise intentions rather than vague visions, with trained and chastened determination instead of buoyant aspiration. He obeys the sterner stress. Everybody accepts this lot in secular affairs; why not in religion? Our faith is not a private joy only, but a public servant. It has a task to fulfil, an obligation to meet, a warfare to press, a society to enrich. It cannot undertake those duties while it remains in a child-state, while it asks how can it be happy. It must become a man, it must pass up into the necessities that accompany manhood. A man must think, where a child would feel; a man must be conscious of what he is about, where a child can afford to follow its own inspiration. It must be so; to deny it in religion is to assert that in religion we must for ever remain children, that there is no room in religion for the exercise of a man's special capacities of reason and resolution, no opportunity for a man's peculiar service.—H. SCOTT HOLLAND.

THE STUDY BIBLE

DIM MIRRORS

*Now we see in a mirror,
darkly.*

1 Cor. XIII. 12.

CONSCIENCE is like a metal mirror—you can let it rust and become dull or you can keep it burnished and bright, so that you can see your Saviour's face in it.

T. CHALMERS.

If ever a man strove for clearness of form it was St. Paul. He had by nature a strongly dogmatic tendency, and besides lived in the bliss of a new revelation. Yet this is the man who says that now we see through a glass darkly. That confession comes, with peculiar impressiveness, from his lips ; and to hear it from him affects us in the same way as to see a strong man in tears. We see through a glass, darkly. Literally, it is an enigma. We see things only at present as an enigma ; that is to say, we can only guess what they really are.

St. Paul's thought is that at present we are children in knowledge, who are only able to guess at the actual thing, and our knowledge of the reality is reserved till by and by. Perhaps a still better illustration would be the relation of the New to the Old Testament. The Old Testament is in picture. Its institutions, its ceremonies, its sacrifices were only shadows of better things to come. But it is a great mistake to suppose that the people of the Old Testament knew that. They did not know that they were only looking at shadows. They took these institutions to be the realities ; just as children suppose the ideal world in which they live to be the real one. And St. Paul's great thought is that by and by we shall stand to our present selves in the same relation as the people of the New Testament stand to those of the Old. The very new Testament will one day be an old Testa-

ment ; and even the representations of truth which it gives will pass away.—J. STALKER.

The science of all sciences is the knowledge of God. To know Him—what He has done for man, what He is to man, what man is to Him, nay, what He is to Himself, to know at once the tenderness of His love and the mystery of His Being—this is the highest exercise of man's mind, this is the purest joy of man's heart, this is the only one true aim of life, this alone can be called life ; this is the life the pulses of which begin to beat within us in this world, this is the life which swells out into its full perfection in the world to come, for “ this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.”—DEAN RANDALL.

Most men's minds are dim mirrors, in which all truth is seen, as St. Paul tells us, darkly ; this is the fault most common and most fatal ; dullness of heart and mistiness of sight, increasing to utter hardness and blindness ; Satan breathing upon the glass, so that if we do not sweep the mist laboriously away, it will take no image.—RUSKIN.

Here our knowledge is but a faint reflection of the great realities. Even when God Himself reveals things to me, great part of them is still kept under the veil. Hereafter we shall see the objects themselves, and see them clearly and distinctly.—J. WESLEY.

O purblind race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves
By taking true for false or false for true ;
Here, through the feeble twilight of this world
Groping, how many, until we pass and reach
That other, where we see as we are seen.

TENNYSON.

THE STUDY BIBLE

FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE

*Now abideth faith, hope, love,
these three ; and the greatest
of these is love.*

1 Cor. XIII. 13.

WHEN those three goddesses, say the poets, strove for the golden ball, Paris adjudged it to the Queen of Love. Here are three celestial graces, in a holy emulation, if I may so speak, striving for the chieftdom ; and our Apostle gives it to Love. The greatest of these is Charity. Not that other daughters are black, but that Charity excels in beauty. We may say of this sister, as it was said of the good woman, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all." Paul doth not disparage any when he saith "Charity is the greatest." All stars are bright, though one star may differ from another in glory. Faith is excellent, so is Hope ; but the greatest of all is love. These are three strings often touched : Faith, whereby we believe all God's promises to be true, and ours ; hope, whereby we wait for them with patience ; charity, whereby we testify that we believe and hope. He that hath faith cannot distrust ; he that hath hope cannot put from anchor ; he that hath charity will not lead an evil life, for love keeps the commandments. Paul gives faith the precedency, for faith always goes before, hope follows after. Faith guides, adviseth, rectifieth. Hope courageously encounters with all adversaries. Faith without hope is knowledge without valour ; hope without faith is rashly presumptive. Charity differs from them both, yet they are all united together, and cannot be sundered. These three divine graces are a created trinity, and have some glimmering resemblance of the trinity uncreated.—THOMAS ADAMS.

How can faith and hope be said to endure to eternity, when faith will be lost in sight and hope in fruition? With hope there is but little difficulty. New glories, new treasures of knowledge and of love, will ever raise, and nourish, blessed hopes of yet more and higher hopes which no disappointment will blight. But how can faith abide—faith, which is the evidence of things not seen—where all things once believed are seen? In the form of holy confidence and trust, faith will abide even there. The stay of all conscious created being, human or angelic, is dependence on God; and where the faith which comes by hearing is out of the question, the faith which consists in trusting will be the only faith possible. Thus hope will remain, as anticipation certain to be fulfilled; faith will remain as trust, entire and undoubting—the anchor of the soul, even where no tempest comes. The greater of these—not greater than these—is love. “The greater,” as De Wette beautifully remarks, “*because it contains in itself the root of the other two* : we believe only one whom we love, we hope only that which we love.” And thus the forms of faith and hope which will there for ever subsist, will be sustained in, and overshadowed by, the all-pervading superior element of eternal love.

H. ALFORD.

For charity will neither fail nor be transformed when hope shall be changed into possession and faith into realisation. In this life the companion of faith and hope, charity will then be the companion of possession and reality.—DEAN COLET.

Faith has its excellency in this, hope in that, and love in another thing. Faith will do that which hope cannot do, hope can do that which faith cannot do, and love can do things distinct from both.—BUNYAN.

THE QUESTION OF THE RESURRECTION

*How say some among you
that there is no resurrection
of the dead?*

1 Cor. XV. 12.

THE Apostle now turns to a different line of argument—a *reductio ad absurdum*. He maintains the doctrine of the resurrection by showing the incredible absurdities to which a belief in the contrary must lead. If you do not believe in a resurrection, you must believe: (1) That Christ is not raised, and you are still slaves of sin. This you know by personal experience to be false. (2) That all who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. (3) That God gives men a good hope in Christ, and that it, not being fulfilled here, is never to be fulfilled. In other words, if there be no resurrection, that those who have lived the most unselfish lives have perished like beasts; and that God arouses a hunger and thirst of the purest kind, only that the hunger should never be satisfied, and the thirst never be quenched.—T. SHORE.

It is with belief in a life after death as it is with the belief in God. We believe in God not because we can demonstrate His existence, but because we find in the universe a purpose and a meaning which make it reasonable to believe in Him. So we believe in a life after death not because we can prove it scientifically, but because we see the God in whom we believe working out His plan in the world, and this plan includes as an integral part the development and perfection of individuals. Like belief in God, belief in immortality unifies our world and meets needs in ourselves which must otherwise go unsatisfied.—W. A. BROWN.

Our dissatisfaction with any other solution is the blazing evidence of immortality.—EMERSON.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

*Now hath Christ been raised
from the dead, the firstfruits
of them that are asleep.*

1 Cor. XV. 20.

needs lay herself down by the mortal remains, not of a man, but of a religion.—DE PRESSENSÉ.

If the fact of the Resurrection of Christ be in itself, as it confessedly is, absolutely unique in all human experience, the point which it occupies in history is absolutely unique also. To this point all former history converges as to a certain goal; from this point all subsequent history flows as from its life-giving spring. So far from being beset by greater difficulties than any other historical fact, it is the one fact towards which the greatest number of lines of evidence converge. In one form or other pre-Christian history is a prophecy of it, and post-Christian history an embodiment of it.

B. F. WESTCOTT.

The Resurrection of Jesus stands for the conviction that it was the whole man, the whole personality, all that had gone to make Him what He was in this life, that survived the Crucifixion and the burial. The individual personality was not lost or dissipated or absorbed in something greater than itself; it was all there, freed, as we may say, from some of its earthly limitations, but not from those of individuality, still having an organ of expression of itself. It is this conviction that constitutes the faith of a Christian in the Resurrection.—J. F. BETHUNE-BAKER.

By the Life which is the Light of men, there will one day be a marvellous quickening again of the world and

THE STUDY BIBLE

mortal creatures. He who created them out of nothing, will new-create their ruins ; though not for any merits of their own. The mere will and goodness of God, which was the cause of the first creation, will be the sole and only cause of the new creation.—J. COLET.

The risen believers are looked upon as a new family, a new class of lineage, if we may so say, in the human race. And as He who heads the line is the image of God, the instrument and ideal of creation, this new spiritual progeny of His for the first time fulfils the original purpose of creation.—H. A. A. KENNEDY.

The first-fruits were the best, what was then ripest, and so most valuable ; the first-fruits sanctified the rest of the harvest, representing the whole, gave right to the ingathering of it, and ensured it ; the first-fruits were only such that were of the same kind with them, not to the tares and chaff, to briers and thorns. So Christ is only the first-fruits of the saints.—J. GILL.

The importance of the Resurrection of Christ is a thing which we must each learn for ourselves ; it will not be felt by our being assured by others that it is important. But few persons of any education reach the age of manhood without having an opportunity to learn it, whether they choose to avail themselves of it or to neglect it. It need not be produced by any remarkable outward circumstances ; it may be merely the natural effect of our own minds, feeling their powers, and keenly alive to the wonderful aspect which life wears, even when regarded in its common course of events. But be the exciting cause what it may, the effect is almost sure to occur : we commune with our own hearts, and think of life and death and ask ourselves what will be our condition when we shall die, whether we shall but fall asleep in Christ, to be awakened by Him.—T. ARNOLD.

THE RESURRECTION BODY

But some one will say, How are the dead raised ? and with what manner of body do they come ?

1 Cor. XV. 35.

THE Apostle appeals to analogies to show that transformations from one form of being to another, and the variety of bodies which we observe in nature, suggest the

reasonableness of an appropriate embodiment for the spirit in the heavenly world. The Apostle does not undertake to say what is the nature of this higher embodiment, this "house from heaven." It is enough for him to know that it will be in the image of the glorified Christ—a body conformed to His own glorious body. What the relation will be between the present body and that which is to be, Paul does not say. His analogy of the relation of the seed to its product suggests at once a connection and a difference. The grain comes out of the seed, but it is also something new and different from it. The analogy would be quite inappropriate if the Apostle had conceived the Resurrection as consisting in the resuscitation of the buried flesh. It was enough for Paul to maintain a continuity of corporeal life.

G. B. STEVENS.

The crucial matter for Paul at this point consists in each seed having a body peculiar to itself. This body will be the one best fitted to fulfil the functions of the life which informs it. Through it that life will find its most appropriate and effective expression.

H. A. A. KENNEDY.

The mortal and corruptible body is to be exchanged for one immortal, incorruptible and spiritual. He clearly does not contemplate any re-collection of the material particles of their dead bodies. They will

THE STUDY BIBLE

on the day of resurrection be reclothed, by an act of God, in the spiritual body, which will be in some sort of continuity (which St. Paul does not clearly explain) with their old body, but which he speaks of as new and different. Thus there certainly is, as St. Paul conceives it, a kind of resurrection which is compatible with the decay of the former body ; but that he did not so interpret Christ's Resurrection is shown by his definite language about it, and by the picture which is in his mind of the instantaneous " change " which he anticipates for those who survive till the end.—C. GORE.

A body fitted to the capacities and wants of man's highest part, his spirit.—H. ALFORD.

It is nowhere asserted in the New Testament that we shall rise again with our bodies. Unless a man will say that the stalk, the blade, and the ear of corn are actually the same thing with the single grain which is put into the ground, he cannot quote Paul as saying that we shall rise again with the same bodies. Nothing can be plainer than the expression which he uses, " Thou sowest not that body that shall be." He says also, with equal plainness, of the body, " It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body ; there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." These words require to be examined closely, and involve remotely a deep metaphysical question. In common language, the terms " body " and " spirit " are accustomed to be opposed, and are used to represent two things which are totally distinct. But Paul here brings the two expressions together, and speaks of a " spiritual body." Paul therefore did not oppose " body " to " spirit " ; and though the looseness of modern language may allow us to do so, and yet to be correct in our ideas, it may save some confusion if we consider " spirit " as

opposed to “matter,” and if we take “body” to be a generic term, which comprises both. A “body,” therefore, in the language of Paul, is something which has a distinct individual existence. Paul tells us that every individual, when he rises again, will have a spiritual body; but the remarks which I have made may show how different is the idea conveyed by these words from the notions which some persons entertain, that we shall rise again with the same identical body. Paul appears effectually to preclude this notion, when he says, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”—E. BURTON.

In opposition to a gross identification of the present body with the resurrection body, which lies at the ground of the objection urged, Paul asserts a distinction between the two—a distinction, however, which does not exclude the identity of the fundamental substance or germ. Amid the constant change in our bodies there is something fixed which makes us recognisable as the same from the cradle to the grave—something which gives form, feature, and organisation to this ever-moving current of matter which is momentarily condensed into what we call our bodies. And what is this but the plastic principle of life which is ever shaping the materials which nature gives it for its own uses, and in accordance with an inward law which moulds us after our kind.—LANGE.

Just as the grain of wheat that has to fructify must die, so likewise for man to rise again, immortal and glorious, he must mortify himself and die. A man mortifies himself by believing in, thinking upon, and exercising himself in the things which he believes, just as he quickens himself by thinking upon and by practising those things which he loves.—JUAN DE VALDÉS.

THE HEAVENLY CALLING

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord.

1 Cor. XV. 58.

THIS text is the capital upon this Corinthian column ; it is the climax of the Apostle's argument ; it is the summit to which he has been ascending throughout this whole Epistle. That "wherefore" looks back to the whole preceding chapters ; there is not a single brick that the Apostle has laid that is unnecessary to sustain the weight of this great appeal.

The word used in Greek for "abounding" is the word used when they took up twelve baskets full of fragments which were over and above. There is not much over and above in our ordinary Christian life. Talk about our "cup running over!"—there is seldom in it more than the dregs ; we very rarely reach the brim. Now, my distinct judgment is that the blessing we give to other people is that which overflows from our own wealth ; the man who is in abundant health, with a smile upon his face, living with abundant grace behind him, he blesses other people. He who, living hand to mouth, finds a difficulty in making the two ends meet in the spiritual life, who is living below God's highest standard and who is satisfied with it, is not the man who can bless others. We do not abound ; our religion does not overflow—it has to be pumped up ; it is not like a fountain that rushes out. There is an evident drain and strain and stress and difficulty in producing the effect, instead of it coming with the volume and force of the ocean breaker.—F. B. MEYER.

QUIT YOU LIKE MEN

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all that ye do be done in love.

1 Cor. XVI. 13-14.

THE words "stand fast" mean continue, be constant, and persevere in the faith, start not aside, nor slide from it.—J. LEIGH.

The watchfulness and wakefulness which He enjoins does not mean that you should be always in a state of painful alarm. At first, of course, it must be an effort, but the longer and more regularly you go on with it, the easier and more natural you will find it. He will help you to the habit of watching yourself, and restraining your inclinations, more and more entirely, as a good rider restrains an unruly horse that he is used to. One reason why watching and controlling one's self seems to most men a hard and painful task is the irregular and unsteady way in which it is too commonly practised. Those who have long done it most effectually are least seen to do it; their goodness sits easy upon them.—J. KEBLE.

One comes across human beings at times with complex characters, so that whatever name one applies to them seems a fitting one, only the one word "man" seems inapplicable to them.—MAXIM GORKY.

Religion without manliness acts as if Providence were a tyrant, the world a prison, and man a slave. Instead of holding its clear look up with conscious and grateful dignity to the light, and standing face to face with all the cheerful and solemn facts of life, and looking straight into the eyes of every creature, as faith gives it a supreme right to do, it creeps to church abjectly, is half afraid to own its cause, and shows its meagre mind by unillumined criticisms.—F. D. HUNTINGTON.

2 CORINTHIANS

THE GOD OF COMFORT

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort ; who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction.

2 Cor. I. 3-4.

OF all sorts and degrees of comfort, who hath all comfort at His disposal. No comfort can be found anywhere else ; He hath the sole gift of it. Not only some, but all comfort ; no imaginable comfort is wanting in Him ; nor to be found out of Him. All degrees of comfort are to be found in Him. And he is not fit to comfort others who hath not experienced the comforts of God.—J. LEIGH.

The God of all comfort, and from whom cometh the Comforter.—M. HENRY.

The names of God are each an impregnable fortress, where we may always reverently and confidently find refuge. The highest glories of the Deity become a comfort to us when they are brought down to our lowliness.—RIEGER.

Like a man of faith, Paul mentions “ mercies ” and “ comfort ” before he proceeds to speak of afflictions. The tribulation of believers is not inconsistent with God’s mercy, and does not beget in them suspicion of it ; nay, they feel that He is the God of all comfort, i.e. who imparts the only perfect comfort in every instance.

A. R. FAUSSET.

There are more than one kind of mercies and comforts ; there are sweet and bitter. Whatever ours are it is sufficient to know that they come from Him, who is our God and Father ; and it is but reasonable to leave the choice to Him.—QUESNEL.

THE YEA AND AMEN

How many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea : wherefore also through him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us.

2 Cor. I. 20.

THE words "yea" and "amen," agreeing together, stand in pleasant antithesis to the words "yea" and "nay," ver. 19, which are at variance with each other : "yea" by affirmation ; "amen" by an oath ; or "yea" in respect of the Greeks ; "amen" in respect of the Jews ; for "yea" is Greek, "amen" is Hebrew ; or "yea" in respect of God who promises, "amen" in respect of believers ; "yea" in respect of the Apostles, "amen" in respect of their hearers. "To the glory of God," or "to God, for His glory," for the truth of God is glorified in all His promises, which are verified in Christ. For whatever may be the number of the promises of God, there is in Him the "Yea," and in Him the "Amen" ; every promise has its "yea" and "amen," i.e. its fulfilment in Him.—BENGEL.

He was, as it were, a living incarnate "Amen" to the promises.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

Christ has honoured God's veracity.—HEUBNER.

All God's promises are "yea" in Christ's person and work, and are "amen" in the Church which confesses His name.—BESSER.

You may trust the Divine Promises when they call ; you may follow them where they lead ; you may hold by them in the darkness ; you may call upon their aid when you are defeated ; for to all of them the life of Christ, the love and holiness that speak in His life and death, for ever say "Yea," and for ever, "Amen."

FREDERICK TEMPLE.

THE STUDY BIBLE

THE EARNEST OF THE SPIRIT

Who also sealed us, and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

2 Cor. I. 22.

IF the part of the payment has been given us by God, He will not fail to give the whole.—THEOPHILUS.

Wherefore God would undergo the loss, if He should not give the inheritance.

CHRYSOSTOM.

The Greeks bought usually for ready money; howbeit sometimes they gave earnest, and this earnest was usually a hundredth part of the whole bargain.

J. TRAPP.

“Earnest” is used for a “pledge,” which is given up at the payment of a debt; but elsewhere for “earnest money,” which is given beforehand, that an assurance may be afforded as to the subsequent full performance of the bargain. For the earnest is to be completed by paying the balance in full, not to be taken away: whence he who has an earnest does not restore it as a pledge, but requires the completion of the payment.

BENGEL.

As applied by St. Paul, it had the force of a condensed parable, such as the people of commercial cities like Corinth and Ephesus would readily understand. They were not to think that their past spiritual experience had any character of finality. It was rather but the pledge of yet greater gifts to come, even of that knowledge of God which is eternal life (John xvii. 3). The same thought is expressed, under a more Hebrew image, in the “firstfruits of the Spirit” in Rom. viii. 23.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

Stamping His image on our hearts, thus marking and sealing us as His own property.—J. WESLEY.

SATAN'S DEVICES

That no advantage may be gained over us by Satan : for we are not ignorant of his devices.

2 Cor. II. 11.

SATAN hath always further trials and temptations for those who have no meekness of heart or humility.

RIEGER.

The phraseology is that of one who is, as it were, playing a game against the Tempter, in which the souls of men are at once the counters and the stake. The words "We are not ignorant of his devices" comes from a wide and varied experience. St. Paul had been buffeted by a messenger of Satan (chap. xii. 7); had once and again been hindered by him in his work (1 Thess. ii. 18); was ever wrestling, not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers (Eph. vi. 12); and so he knew how the Tempter could turn even the rules of an ascetic rigour, or the remorse of a sin-burdened conscience, into an occasion of sin.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

The personality and agency of the adversary can hardly be recognised in plainer terms than this.

H. ALFORD.

The Apostle thus exposes the versatility, craftiness, evil devices, and malice of the enemy.—CHRYSOSTOM.

He is a master in the art of deception, full of cunning devices to catch men in the net of his deceits. Sometimes he lulls them to sleep in the bosom of the Church, and sometimes by inspirations of severity endeavours to drive them to despair. The promise of conquest is given to those who resist, not to those who dispute with, him; to parley with him is the way to be overcome by him.—W. BURKITT.

'Tis we tempt the devil.—G. ELIOT.

TRIUMPH IN CHRIST

*Thanks be unto God, which
always leadeth us in triumph
in Christ, and maketh mani-
fest through us the savour of
his knowledge in every place.*

2 Cor. II. 14.

THIS is a beautiful picture. The subject ought to be treated pictorially. We should see a great king with a great procession of chariots behind him, and those chariots full of saved men, and the Captain of their salvation at the head pointing to these men as proofs of the reality and energy and beneficence of His redeeming and saving grace. Let the heart keep the picture vividly before its eyes : Christ at the head, miles of chariots, all golden, all filled with living hymns, all wounded men, but wounded to their own salvation ; and as they come along they say, We have been taken by Christ at the spear-point ; if you want to know what Christ can do, read the record of our experience. This reading of the text does two things : first, it puts Christ in His right position, and, secondly, it puts Christians in their right position, and not Christians only, but Christian apostles and martyrs, the leaders and heads of the visible Church upon earth. We are, then, to be specimens of Christ's victorious grace.—J. PARKER.

There was little of triumph in Paul's career, and yet, in my text and in the neighbouring verses, it is clearly of the familiar image of earthly triumphs that his thoughts are full. He knew that when a Roman conqueror walked in triumph incense was always burned along the streets through which he passed. It was to the victor "an odour of life unto life," being the summit of his present exaltation and the pledge of his historic immortality. But to the captives it was "an odour of death unto death," since, before the car of the

2 CORINTHIANS

conqueror climbed the Capitol, those unhappy victims were always led aside from the triumphal procession at the foot of the Capitoline hill to be murdered in the damp vaults of the Tullianum. But amidst this imagery of triumph it is not of himself that St. Paul thinks as the victor. Christ was the victor. It was Christ who was riding in majesty. Paul was the poor prisoner branded with the stigmata, led forth through city after city, beside the wheels of his Master's chariot. He could give thanks to God in Christ because he had become in Christ Jesus a new creation. All carnal affections were dead in him, and all things belonging to the Spirit lived and grew in him.—F. W. FARRAR.

St. Paul regarded himself as a trophy of God's victorious power in Christ. His almighty conqueror was leading him about, through all the world, a sample of His triumphant power at once to subdue and to save. The foe of Christ was now the servant of Christ. As to be led in triumph by man is the most miserable, so to be led in triumph by God is the most glorious lot.

R. C. TRENCH.

Our only true triumphs are God's triumphs over us. His defeats of us are our only true victories.

H. ALFORD.

Thanks be unto God who shows us in triumph, not as conquered, but as the ministers of His victory; not only the victory, but the open "showing" of the victory is denoted, for there follows "who maketh manifest." The *triumph* forcibly strikes the eyes, the *savour* the nostrils.—BENGEL.

By the savour of the knowledge of Christ the Apostle plainly meaneth the good report that the Gospel had in every place. Christian character always carries a sweet savour—M. POOLE.

THE STUDY BIBLE

LIVING EPISTLES

Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men.

2 Cor. III. 2.

THE words "written in our hearts" mean wherein we do inwardly and heartily rejoice.—J. LEIGH.

The Christian is the world's Bible, and the only one it reads. The strongest argument for the truth of Christianity is the man filled with the Spirit of Christ. The best proof of Christ's Resurrection is a living Church, which itself is walking in new life, and drawing life from Him who has overcome death.

T. CHRISTLIEB.

The *living epistle* needs no translation to be understood in every country and clime; a humble, gentle, holy, Christlike life preaches to the common ear all the world over. Let a man reveal his soul in the inarticulate speech of an earnest, pure, and truthful life, and this will be a language which the profoundest must admire, while the simplest can appreciate. The most elaborate discourse on sanctification will prove tame and ineffective in comparison with the eloquence of a humble, holy walk with God.—J. CAIRD.

What is any description of Christianity upon paper as compared to the living epistle which all men can read? We want Christian men and women, not their books or their money only, but themselves.

NORMAN MACLEOD.

Your faith and holiness are an epistle to me such as I do not carry about in my pocket or lay up in my room, but it is in my heart, where I carry about continually a thankful remembrance of you. Nor are you taken notice of by me only, for all take notice of you.

M. POOLE.

OUR SUFFICIENCY

Our sufficiency is from God.

2 Cor. III. 5.

EACH fresh discovery of our helplessness, if we use the opportunity, reveals to us at the same time a present source of succour. We are alone, as it may seem, in the midst of the world, which moves on its way with irresistible force ; we are beset and baffled by circumstances which lie wholly without our control ; we dishonour and discredit by our faint-heartedness the name which it is our privilege to bear ; yet, even so, in isolation, in failure, in dejection, only let the thought of self perish, and we shall know that we are not desolate : " our sufficiency is of God."

B. F. WESTCOTT.

When a man really holds communion with God, he will be so emptied of all confidence in himself, and so united to the source of all light and power, that even when he is triumphing in a Divine sufficiency, no words can express his consciousness of utter insufficiency in himself.—RIEGER.

All kind of good, all things which concern eternal life, faith in God, the strengthened will by which we do what is acceptable to Him, all come from God. All thoughts of holiness come from Him ; all speaking and doing that which is right are from Him, and are the fruit of His grace working in us. Our strength is from God, and yet when given to us it is *our* own sufficiency, to be used by us, though it spring not *of* ourselves, but is infused by Him.—J. DENTON.

Good thoughts, which are the first seed and smallest beginning of good works, are, as well as the rest, the effect of grace, and that grace is not the fruit of our merits.—QUESNEL.

THE STUDY BIBLE

THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT

The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

2 Cor. III. 6.

THE word "letter" (*gramma*) here stands, not for what we call the literal meaning of Scripture, as contrasted with one which is allegorical or spiritual, but for the whole written code or law of Judaism. St. Paul does not contrast the literal meaning of that code with the so-called mystical exposition of it, but speaks of the written code as such. The contrast between the "letter" in this sense and the "spirit" is a familiar thought with St. Paul. No outward command, even though it come from God, and is "holy, and just, and good" (Rom. vii. 12), can, as such, do more than make men conscious of sin. What was wanting was the life-giving power of the Spirit. The word here (as in Rom. ii. 27 ; vii. 6) appears to hover between the sense of "spirit" as representing any manifestation of ~~an~~ Divine Life that gives life—in which sense the words of Christ are "spirit and life" (John vi. 63), and Christ Himself is a "quickening spirit" (1 Cor. xv. 45, and ver. 17 of this chapter)—and the more distinctly personal sense in which St. Paul speaks of "the Spirit," the Holy Spirit, and to which we commonly limit our use of the name of "the Holy Ghost" in His relation to the Father and Son. Of that Spirit St. Paul says that "it quickens"; it can rouse into life not only the slumbering conscience as the Law had done, but the higher spiritual element in man—can give it strength to will the healthy energy of new affections, new prayers, new impulses.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

The letter which God fills with His Spirit becomes life-giving.—QUESNEL.

THE SOURCE OF OUR LIBERTY

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

2 Cor. III. 17.

WHERE the Spirit of the Lord is *not*, there is slavery.—A. MACLAREN.

The "*Spirit*" which the Lord bestows is prominent in the New Testament, the *letter* in the Old Testament.—A. R. FAUSSET.

There is liberty from servile fear, liberty from the guilt and the power of sin, liberty to behold with open face the glory of the Lord.—J. WESLEY.

The liberty which seemeth here to be chiefly intended is a liberty from the blindness and hardness of heart which is upon men until they have received the Holy Spirit.—M. POOLE.

Freedom is not an occasional largess of the Divine Spirit. It is the invariable accompaniment of the Spirit's true action. It is the very atmosphere of His presence. Wherever He really is there is also freedom. This liberty comes with the gift of truth ; it comes along with that gift of which in its fullness the Eternal Spirit is the only giver. He gives freedom from error for the reason ; freedom from constraint for the affections ; freedom for the will from the tyranny of sinful and human wills. Such freedom is, in fact, a creation of grace : the sons of God alone enjoy it.

H. P. LIDDON.

Liberty is opposed to three things : (1) Necessity ; when the Spirit of God dwells in a man He frees him from the necessity of sinning. (2) Compulsion ; such a one doth nothing by force, and from a principle without, but from an inward instinct and impulse. (3) Restraint ; when God sets a man at liberty He enlarges his heart.

J. LEIGH.

REFLECTED GLORY

We all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.

2 Cor. III. 18.

THE mirror is before you : look into it, look steadfastly, believingly, and lovingly, and a miracle will be wrought. The glory of the Lord reflected there will be photographed upon you, and you will be transformed into the same image. And this is no mere fancy. It is a spiritual law which, like every spiritual law, is just a natural law at its farthest reach. It is ever thus with the doctrines of Christianity. You find, when you consider those high mysteries and penetrate into the heart of them, that they are not mysteries at all, but familiar principles of daily experience operating beyond the domain of experience. Look at the principle which St. Paul here lays down, and do you not recognise it as a law of common experience. You know, for example, how one personality impresses itself upon another, if there is mutual trust and affection and admiration.—DAVID SMITH.

As clear water presents an image of those who look upon it, of the sun itself and the vaulted sky, so the pure heart is converted into a kind of copy and mirror of the Divine glory.—THEODORET.

We not only look into the Divine glory, but we receive a degree of lustre from it, as a piece of pure silver receives the rays of the sun when it is placed within its beams and reflects them—not merely because of its own nature, but because of the sun's radiance. In like manner the soul, purified, receives a beam of the Spirit's glory and reflects it.—CHRYSOSTOM.

2 CORINTHIANS

The relation of this sentence to the foregoing is one of sequence and not of contrast, and it is obviously important to maintain in the English, as in the Greek, the continuity of allusive thought involved in the use of the same words as in ver. 14. "We," says the Apostle, after the parenthesis of ver. 17, "are free, and therefore we have no need to cover our faces, as slaves do before the presence of a great king. There is no veil over our hearts, and therefore none over the eyes with which we exercise our faculty of spiritual vision. We are as Moses was when he stood before the Lord with the veil withdrawn."—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

The brightness on the face of Moses faded away and left no trace. It effaced none of the marks of sorrow and care, and changed none of the lines of that strong, stern face. But, says Paul, the glory which we behold sinks inward, and changes us, as we look, into its own image. The power to which is committed the perfecting of our characters lies in looking upon Jesus. It is not the mere beholding, but the gaze of love and trust that moulds us by silent sympathy into the likeness of His wondrous beauty. Love makes us like.

A. MACLAREN.

In contrast with the heart-veiled, all those who have become sons of God enjoy unclouded communion with Christ. They see Him with the face of their inner man unveiled. As the true Christ is Christ glorified, it is the "glory of the Lord" that they thus behold. With this unobstructed gaze a metamorphosis begins by which they are transfigured to the same image which the Lord Himself wears. The transfiguration is progressive; it advances from one stage of glory to another. Glory is of the essence of Spirit, and is the outward form in which Spirit manifests itself.—J. WAITE.

EARTHEN VESSELS

We have this treasure in earthen vessels.

2 Cor. IV. 7.

IN bodies, subject to be broken by continual pressure.—DR. WHITBY.

The ancients kept their treasure in *jars*, or *vessels*. There are earthen vessels, which yet may be clean; on the contrary a golden vessel may be filthy.—BENGEL.

The treasure is “the knowledge of the glory of God” as possessed by the Apostle. It was the practice of Eastern kings, who stored up their treasures of gold and silver, to fill jars of earthenware with coin or bullion. “So,” St. Paul says, in a tone of profound humility, “it is with us. In these frail bodies of ours—‘earthen vessels’—we have that priceless treasure.” The passage is instructive, as showing that the “vessels of wood and of earth” in 2 Tim. ii. 20 are not necessarily identical with those made for dishonour. The words have probably a side glance at the taunts that had been thrown out as to his bodily infirmities. “Be it so,” he says, “we admit all that can be said on that score, and it is that men may see that the excellence of the power which we exercise comes from God, and not from ourselves.”—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

As the Apostle had spoken many and great things of the indescribable glory, there was danger that some would say, “How can those who have such glory continue in these mortal bodies?” He therefore says that this is indeed a matter of great surprise, and a remarkable instance of Divine Power, that an earthen vessel should be able to endure such extreme splendour, and to hold in custody so great a treasure.

CHRYSOSTOM.

DAILY RENEWAL

*Though our outward man is
decaying, yet our inward man
is renewed day by day.*

2 Cor. IV. 16.

THAT Divine fire kindled within them is daily refining and sublimating them. Life from their Lord is still flowing and causing them to grow, abating the power of sin, strengthening a fainting faith, quickening a languishing love, teaching the soul the ways of wounding strong corruptions and fortifying its weak graces ; yea, in wonderful ways, raising them by their falls, and strengthening them by their very troubles, working them up to humility and vigilance, and sending them to Christ for strength by the experience of their weaknesses and failings.—LUTHER.

The testimony of a good conscience from within, and the light of God's favourable countenance from above, put more true joy into the heart than any outward thing can overshadow.—BP. SANDERSON.

The destruction of an enemy, such as our body certainly is, is a good step towards a victory. What does it signify how this wall of clay perishes, which hinders the renovation of our soul, and obstructs its sight of God ? It is the very thing which ought to constitute a Christian's joy, and to raise his courage under sickness, old age, and at the approach of death itself.—QUESNEL.

God preaches a sermon to us on this text with the coming of every season, and it is but a sample of what He is teaching us every day. It is only the outside that perishes. The tree has life within itself, which will break into joyous beauty again when the spring-time comes. Each human life reads the same lesson if we have only wisdom to receive it.—J. G. GREENHOUGH.

THE STUDY BIBLE

OUR LIGHT AFFLICTION

Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.

2 Cor. IV. 17.

MARK the gradation : for affliction there is glory ; for light affliction a weight of glory ; and for light affliction which is for a moment an eternal weight of

glory.—W. BURKITT.

The glory above is true and real, bears weight, and so bears aright the name of glory, which in the Hebrew signifies *weight* ; and the Apostle's expression seems to allude to that sense. Speaking of this same glory to come, he calls it *a far more excellent weight of glory*. It weighs down all labour and sufferings in the way, so far that they are not worth speaking of in respect of it. Other glory is over-spoken, but this glory, over-glorious to be duly spoken, exceeds and rises above all that can be spoken of it.—LUTHER.

Whereupon they weighed things aright, they did as it were put the heavenly glory in one scale, and their earthly sufferings in the other ; and pondering things in their thought they found afflictions to be "light," and the glory of heaven to be "a far more exceeding weight." That which sense was ready to pronounce heavy and long, grievous and tedious, faith perceived to be "light" and short, but "for a moment." On the other hand, the worth and weight of the crown of glory, as it is exceeding great in itself, so it is esteemed to be by the believing soul, it far exceeds all his expressions and thought ; and it will be a special support in our sufferings, when we can perceive them appointed as the way and preparation for the enjoyment of the future glory.—M. HENRY.

THINGS TEMPORAL AND ETERNAL

We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

2 Cor. IV. 18.

MANY things which are not seen now will be visible when the journey of our faith is accomplished.

BENGEL.

The Apostle does not say the things which are *seen*, but the things which are *looked at* ; which is something more. We do not regard—do not fix our eyes upon, and direct our aims to—the things which are looked at, but the things which are not looked at. Things which are looked at and discerned by the bodily eye are not the scope of our spiritual vision. We who walk by faith contemplate with our inward eye those objects which we cannot look at with our outward eye ; for we know that those things which we can look at with our outward eye are only temporal, but those which we cannot so discern are eternal.

BP. WORDSWORTH.

“ Seen . . . not seen ; temporal . . . eternal ”—the two languages each with a grammar of its own ; two styles of music, two gamuts, two different ranges altogether of utterance. Here is a new standard of proportion and a new light of colour and a new expression of life ; here, indeed, is a new language bigger and better than our mother tongue.

You should look in the right direction if you would see your own self, O soul ; what is now accounted by you as a severe affliction is working out something beyond itself ; it is working out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. What does “ eternal weight ” mean ? I never heard these two

THE STUDY BIBLE

words put together before ; what is the relation of " eternal " to " weight " or of " weight " to " eternal " ? It should be thus expressed : Weight upon weight of glory, dawn upon dawn of light, morning upon morning of blaze and radiance.

And how does this wondrous vision come about ? It comes about whilst we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. Remember that the great things in life are all not seen. You cannot see love ; you can only see its incarnations. You cannot see faith ; you can only see its works.—J. PARKER.

The things temporal are *seen* ; they are close at hand ; we cannot help being aware of them ; but the things eternal are *not seen* ; neither eye nor ear can discern them ; let them be ever so great, ever so near, still they do not force themselves on our notice ; it is always in itself some trouble and effort of mind to attend to them. As, for instance, these bodies which we have now ; yet because we feel and see our bodies, but cannot in the same way perceive our souls, we naturally care much for the one, and are ready enough to forget the other. Again, God, in whom we live and move and have our being, is surely nearer to us, and more to us, by an infinite deal, than any earthly friend ; but we see our friends on earth, and we see not God. Again, our own afflictions and wrongs, whatever they are, are very near to us ; but the Cross of Christ, which alone can help us to bear them rightly, is far away out of our sight. And so of all other things : Eternity does not touch our hearts as it ought, because it is altogether unseen ; and this is why faith is so great a thing, this is why every thing depends on our believing ; for faith or belief is the turning away of the heart from temporal things to the eternal things.—J. KEBLE.

OUR CLAY COTTAGE

We know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.

2 Cor. V. 1.

OUR clay cottage. The body is called a house because of the singular artifice shown in the framing of it, and because the soul dwells in it. When our earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved, we shall have a heavenly house.

The soul wears the body as a garment ; when it is worn out we shall be provided with a better suit, we shall change our rags for robes.—J. TRAPP.

The similitude is not derived from the wandering of the Israelites in the wilderness, nor from the tabernacle, but is a common one with Greek writers. The whole passage is expressed through the double figure of a house or tent and a garment. The explanation of this abrupt transition from one to the other may be found in the image which, both from his occupation and his birthplace, would naturally occur to the Apostle—the tent of Cilician hair-cloth, which might almost equally suggest the idea of a habitation and of a vesture.

DEAN STANLEY.

The introduction of the word “ house ” here sadly mars the imagery. The Apostle was a *tent*-maker ; and the tents were made of the Cilician hair-cloth, which was also used for *clothing*. Hence the mingling of the images of dwelling and clothing, which in our version is unintelligible, because we do not wear the materials of which houses are built.—H. ALFORD.

As the clothing of grass is its greenness and beauty, so the heavenly glory is the domicile and clothing of the whole man, when he enters into heaven.—BENGEL.

THE STUDY BIBLE

THE JUDGMENT-SEAT

For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ.

2 Cor. V. 10.

THE Greek word shows the influence of Roman associations. In the Gospels the imagery of the last judgment is that of a king sitting on his *throne* (Matt. xxv. 31), and the word is the ever-recurring note of the Apocalypse, in which it occurs forty-nine times. Here the judgment-seat, or *bema*, is the tribunal of the Roman magistrate, raised high above the level of the *basilica*, or hall, at the end of which it stood.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

If we were to employ a homely expression for “made manifest” and say “turned inside out,” it would exactly express the intention of Paul : all that is inward now, and thus hidden, becoming outward then ; all secret things searched out ; every mask stripped off ; every disguise torn away ; whatever any man’s work has been, that day declaring it ; for it shall be eminently a day of *unveiling*, or drawing back the veil which now covers and conceals so much. It shall be a day of *revelation*, in respect of the hidden things of *glory* and of *shame*.—R. C. TRENCH.

No more definite inference must be drawn from this verse as to the place which the saints of God shall hold in the general judgment than it warrants—viz. that they, as well as others, shall be manifested and judged by Him : when, or in company with whom, is not here so much as hinted.—H. ALFORD.

This is said with special emphasis in relation to the Corinthians, who were disposed to give judgment arrogantly against their fellow-men without remembering how bad their own case was.—NEANDER.

LOVE'S CONSTRAINT

The love of Christ constraineth us.

2 Cor. V. 14.

KEEPETH us employed.
BENGEL.

Beareth us on with such a strong and steady prevailing influence as winds and tides exert when they waft the vessel to its destined harbour.—J. WESLEY.

An expression used of those who had a spiritual prophecy upon them, which was very powerful, whereby they could not but speak, also of those in travail, which through pain cannot but cry out. The word signifies being in a penfold from which there is no escape by evasion. It must break through. So is faith in the heart.—J. LEIGH.

This love of Christ had so closed in St. Paul, so hemmed him in and begirt him round, that his adversaries reported him as a madman. The word imports that he was so shut up by his love for his Lord that he could not get out or away from it.—J. TRAPP.

The word has two senses—it means holding together and pressing or driving forth ; so the love of Christ constrains our hearts and affections.—C. F. KLING.

Bears us away, like a strong and resistless torrent.
P. DODDRIDGE.

A better word than “constraineth” could not be found : the idea is that of forcible limitation, either in a good or a bad sense—of confining to one object, or within certain bounds, be that one object a painful or glorious one. The forcible compression of all energies into one line of action.—H. ALFORD.

It holds us that we may not pass beyond the limits which are required by a regard for God’s honour and your welfare.—H. MEYER.

THE STUDY BIBLE

A NEW CREATURE

If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature : the old things are passed away ; behold, they are become new.

2 Cor. V. 17.

ALL things are become new, but only to him who has a new heart.—QUESNEL.

Only the power that makes a world can make a Christian. And when he is so created

“ the old things are passed away,” of their own accord, even as snow in spring. Behold the undeniable change. He has new life, new senses, new faculties, new affections, new appetites. His whole tenor of action and conversation is new, and he lives as it were in a new world. God, men, the whole creation, heaven, earth, and all therein, appear in a new light, and stand related to him in a new manner, since he was created anew in Christ Jesus.—J. WESLEY.

The substance of the soul is the same, the qualities and operations altered. The melancholy man doth not cease to be so after conversion, only the humour is sanctified to a fitness for godly sorrow and holy meditation, etc. ; so of other humours.—J. TRAPP.

All that a man had and purposed before he knew Christ, while he was out of Christ, and when he was not born of the Spirit, all that seemed valuable to him in his natural state, completely lost its influence and authority over him as soon as he believed in Christ, and gave way to the overpowering energy of a new, better, and permanent spirit.—OSIANDER.

The change consists in a new mind, new will, new judgment—not in a new profession.—W. BURKITT.

The old things which have passed away are the original things of the old Adam or of the unregenerate nature, its vanities and self-love.—BP. WORDSWORTH.

RECONCILING THE WORLD

*God was in Christ reconciling
the world unto himself.*

2 Cor. V. 19.

GOD made reconciliation possible to humanity by the gift of Christ, but Christ as the Head and Representative of the race actually accomplished it. The principle underlying it is identical with the principle which underlies our whole religious life, and finds instructive expression in the language of prayer, wherein we virtually ask God to fulfil His own law in us, to fulfil in us all the good pleasure of His goodness.—A. ADAMSON.

It was God who was in Christ, reconciling—not imputing trespasses to—the world, and in us He has vested the ministry of reconciliation. What gave Christ's conciliatory work its entire validity was that God not only originated it but was Himself active in it.

J. WAITE.

It is worthy of note that this is the first occurrence, in order of time, in St. Paul's Epistles, of this word "reconcile" as describing God's work in Christ, and that so applied it occurs only in this Epistle and in Rom. v. 10, written shortly afterwards. The idea involved is that man had been at enmity and was now brought into concord with God. It will be noted that the work is described as originating with the Father and accomplished by the mediation of the Son. The word translated "reconciliation" is, it should be noted, the same as that rendered "atonement" in Rom. v. 11. A better rendering would be "How that it was God who was reconciling in Christ a world unto Himself." The Apostle seems to emphasise the greatness of the redeeming work by pointing at once to its author and its extent.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

THE STUDY BIBLE

THE CHRISTIAN PARADOX

*As poor, yet making many
rich ; as having nothing, and
yet possessing all things.*

2 Cor. VI. 10.

THE Christian life is made up of paradoxes, paradoxes so strange that it is impossible to draw the line where they cease to be miracles.

Alone, and not alone ; weak, yet that weakness strength ; poor, but overflowing rich ; dead, but living ; "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." There is only one clue to these strange contrarieties. The creature to which they belong must be a double creature. There must be something superadded to nature. There must be the divine in conjunction with the human.

J. VAUGHAN.

The series of paradoxes culminates in this. In language which has found echoes in the thoughts of sages, saints, mystics, he utters the truth that in the absolute surrender of the thought of calling anything its own the soul becomes the heir of the universe. All things are his, as with the certainty of an assured inheritance. The beatitude of the meek, of those who claim nothing, is that they "shall inherit the earth," and so all things are theirs—the forces of nature, and the changes and chances of life—for all are working together for their good.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

The whole world belongs to the Christian, because the principle which now governs him is one day to control everything on earth. What the Stoics once said of their wise men was never completely true except of the Christian ; for they alone have that true greatness which is founded upon humility, and they can never be overcome, for they are always in harmony with the will of God.—NEANDER.

GODLY SORROW

Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation.

2 Cor. VII. 10.

AS is the love, so is the sorrow.—D. THOMAS.

Those who make repentance too easy and pleasant a work seek rather to satisfy men for a moment than to save them eternally. Too much indulgence is the cause of relapses. "Godly sorrow," or sorrow according to God, proceeds from a man's grief for having lost his God, and is the effect of an awakened love, which is the life of the heart; but the sorrow of the world arises from a grief at having lost the good things of this world, and this is the effect of sensual desire which is the death of the soul.—QUESNEL.

We are taught that no sorrow ought to be grievous or troublesome to us; so that though repentance have some bitterness in it of itself, it is described as "not to be repented of" because of the sweet and precious fruit which it produces.—CALVIN.

Sorrow, according to God, is to see sin as God sees it. It is not a microscopic self-examination nor a mourning in which self is ever uppermost: *my* character gone; the greatness of *my* sin; the forfeiture of *my* salvation. The thought of God absorbs all that. And the Christian—gazing not on what he is, but on what he desires to be—dares, even when the recollection of his sin is most vivid and most poignant, to say with Peter, thinking less of himself than of God, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

F. W. ROBERTSON.

"The sorrow of the world" consists of anger, rebelliousness, resentment for detection, for censure, for loss of reputation.—J. WAITE.

THE GRACE OF OUR LORD

Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich.

2 Cor. VIII. 9.

YOU know by that knowledge of which love should be a part, "the grace"—love most pure, most rich, most free. He endured poverty, but this is not demanded of you.—W. L. BLACKLEY.

Behold Him who is rich, and who made Himself poor for our sakes. "By Him all things were made." You may be rich in gold and silver and cattle ; but you could not make them. Now see Him who was rich. All things were made by Him. Now see Him who made Himself poor. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Who can conceive His riches ? And now think on His poverty. He is born in a poor inn, wrapped in swaddling clothes, laid in a stable ; He, the Lord of heaven and earth, the Maker of Angels, the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, is fed at the breast of His mother, veils His Majesty, is taken and bound, and scourged, and buffeted, and crowned with thorns.—AUGUSTINE.

But Christ did not give money ; He gave Himself. His riches were perfect happiness ; His poverty was humiliation ; and he humbled Himself that we, through His poverty, might be made rich. He gave Himself to bless the world. This, then, is the example ; and it is the spirit of that example which the Corinthians are urged to imitate. It was *giving*, it was love, that was the essence of the sacrifice. The form was a secondary thing. It was life in His case, it was money in theirs ; the one thing needful was a love like His, which was the desire to give and to bless.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

THE CHEERFUL GIVER

God loveth a cheerful giver. ONE may give with his
2 Cor. IX. 7. hand and pull it back with
his looks.—J. TRAPP.

There are three forms of alms : those who give by constraint, and against their will ; those who give little, and with backwardness ; those who give abundantly, and with joy. God suffers those who give to Him, as it were, by force ; He accepts of those who give themselves voluntarily, though with some reluctance ; but the joy of His heart is for those who give themselves to Him without any reserve, and with the whole joy of their hearts.—QUESNEL.

The principle has a far wider range of application than that of simple alms-giving. Cheerfulness in visits of sympathy, in the daily offices of kindness, in the life of the home, in giving instruction or advice—all come under the head of that which God approves and loves.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

He is not “ liberal ” who gives without pleasure in the act of giving. The pain he feels proves that he would rather have the money than do the noble action.

ARISTOTLE.

It is by the delight which the liberal man finds in giving, that God steals his heart and forces upon him a grace far richer than what he gave.—BERLENBURG BIBLE.

Paul, substituting “ loveth ” for “ blesseth,” shows the connection of ideas, for the harvest of blessings springs from God’s love.—J. WAITE.

God loveth a cheerful giver because such is like Him.—J. HAWES.

The Septuagint renders Prov. xxii. 8, “ God blesses a cheerful man and a giver.”—J. GILL.

THE STUDY BIBLE

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

*Though we walk in the flesh,
we do not war according to
the flesh.*

2 Cor. X. 3.

THE Church needs heroes as well as martyrs ; to contend sometimes for truth and right, as well as sometimes to surrender themselves to the smiter ; men and women in arms against everything which is in the way of the progress of Christ's Kingdom, of the truth and of the knowledge of God ; or which tends to impede or impair their exclusive and complete authority. Man is often compelled to experience that his natural powers are weak and sinful, but his sinful infirmities and afflictions are never allowed to control his method of warfare. The Spirit of that God in whose cause he maintains the conflict, supplies him with weapons of Almighty power which pierce every covering, overcome all opposition, and overthrow the strongest holds. The sword of the Spirit, the enlightening and quickening word, cuts through the most ingeniously contrived knots which the mind of man has been able to form, and batters down and destroys the most powerful defences which the reason of man has constructed against God. This is the light which penetrates the darkness of the human understanding, awakens in men a consciousness of their weakness and errors, convinces them of the revelation God has made of Himself in Christ, and so completely subjects their mental powers to Christ that that revelation becomes their only authority in matters of faith and life. In opposition to an enemy whose equipment is " great power and much craft," the spiritual combatant has not only a Divine energy but a wisdom which is superior to all human craftiness.—C. F. KLING.

GROUND S FOR GLORYING

If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things that concern my weakness.

2 Cor. XI. 30.

WHY does he glory in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses? Because by sufferings he was made like Christ, and because the power and goodness of God are most glorified in making use of so weak and despised an instrument, in order to work out the great and gracious purposes of heaven.—BP. WORDSWORTH.

He will glory—and with a touch of grave irony—in those things with which his enemies reproach him, and will leave his rivals to find what ground for boasting they can in what they call their strength. He is confident that his weak points are stronger than their strong ones.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

Paul does not glory in what he had done, but in what he had borne; he does not speak of his successes, of his converts, of the heresies he had subdued, but he speaks of the manifold trials which he had undergone for Christ. He had “filled up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for His body’s sake, which is the Church.” This marks all his conduct and sufferings as being in the spirit of the cross, that it was for the sake of others.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

The meaning is that, in order to get very near to God, or to let the glorious attractions of almighty love and light lay hold of us and lift us up, we must somehow be impoverished first, belittled, disappointed, baffled, weakened. Obstacles, sicknesses, losses, defeats of our plans, the breakings up of our securities, are God’s opportunities; and He knows how to use them.—F. D. HUNTINGTON.

THE STUDY BIBLE

A THORN IN THE FLESH

*That I should not be exalted
overmuch, there was given to
me a thorn in the flesh.*

2 Cor. XII. 7.

IF it keeps you humble, the thorn is finally woven into the crown of rejoicing.

F. D. HUNTINGTON.

There is abundant evidence that St. Paul did suffer from some acute form of bodily disease. The very word "stake," or "thorn," or "splinter" would suggest to the Corinthian readers of the Epistle the idea of corporeal rather than mental suffering. The "large letter" of his signature (Gal. vi. 11), the characteristic "steadfast gaze," the wish of the Galatians, if it had been possible, to have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him (Gal. iv. 15), all point to the eyes as being the seat of suffering.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

On the whole, putting together the figure here used, that of a thorn, occasioning pain, and the buffeting or putting to shame, it seems quite necessary to infer that the Apostle alludes to some painful and tedious bodily malady, which at the same time put him to shame before those among whom he exercised his ministry.—H. ALFORD.

I believe the Apostle to refer simply to the distresses he had endured through the opposition he met with at Corinth; and he seems most plainly to refer to the false apostle at Corinth. The Apostle himself was, as he styles himself to this church, "the Apostle of Jesus Christ." The person in question is styled here "the apostle or angel of Satan." It is almost impossible to mistake the Apostle's meaning and reference. Jesus Christ sent Paul to proclaim His truth, and found a church at Corinth. Satan, the adversary of God's

truth, sent a man to preach lies at the same place, and turn the church of God into his own synagogue ; and by his teaching lies and calumnies the Apostle was severely buffeted. We need seek no other sense for these expressions.—A. CLARKE.

St. Paul does not disclose the character of his special sorrow, and commentators have sought in vain to pick the lock and reveal the hidden skeleton. But the great lesson to be learnt from the Apostle's silence is this, that there are sorrows in life which cannot be expressed. Superficial souls incapable of great grief will, upon the slightest provocation, fetch out their skeleton from its cupboard and dilate on its special features ; but real griefs are sacred, and noble men are reticent.

W. L. WATKINSON.

Paul was *endowed* with this *infirmity* lest he should fall from the truth and in order that he might escape the sin of elation against God by pride.—IRENÆUS.

The Bible calls trials evils, recognises them as messengers from Satan, though often blessed by God—to be got rid of if possible. The Christians rejoiced *in* tribulation—in God ; but that in spite of, not because of, tribulation. And here God does not command Paul to think the throb of his thorn enjoyable. He only bids him bear it.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

The thorn in his flesh, he says, was a gift from God. It is therefore a mark of His favour. It is a memento of the privileges I have received from Him. God permitted Satan to buffet the Apostle by a thorn ; but under the transmuting influence of God's grace, that thorn has been made to bloom and " blossom as the rose," for an unfading garland of glory to the Apostle's head.—BP. WORDSWORTH.

THE STUDY BIBLE

THE APOSTLE'S PRAYER

Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee : for my power is made perfect in weakness.

2 Cor. XII. 8, 9.

FERVENTLY and frequently Paul prayed. God respecteth not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many they are ; nor the rhetoric of our prayers, how neat they are ; nor the geometry of our prayers, how long they are ; nor the music of our prayers, how melodious they are ; nor the logic of our prayers, how methodical they are ; but the divinity of our prayers, how heart-strung they are. Not gifts but graces prevail in prayer. God does not root out all our Canaanites at once, but leaves some to try and exercise us.—J. TRAPP.

We are reminded of our Lord's three-fold prayer in Gethsemane. Was St. Paul himself reminded of it ? There also the answer to the prayer was not compliance with its petition, but the gift of strength to bear and to endure. From one point of view it seems infinitely more in harmony with our thoughts of God, that the prayer to be relieved from pain should be refused, because it was working out a higher perfection than was attainable without it, than that a deaf ear should have been turned to a prayer to be relieved from the temptation to impurity. Such a prayer seems to us to carry with it something like an assurance of its own prevailing power.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

Paul's case teaches us that the precept of our Lord, " Ask, and it shall be given you," must not be understood as promising a direct answer to every prayer, but as expressing the certainty that He who knows our

infirmities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking, will, in the end, supply our needs with all that we require, though not with all that we desire or think that we require. The Apostle prayed simply that a great impediment to his usefulness might be removed ; and even this was not granted. And, in like manner, a greater than the Apostle had “ offered up prayer and supplications, with strong crying and tears,” and yet the prayer was not granted. If the prayer of Paul and the prayer of Christ were refused, none need complain or be perplexed.—DEAN STANLEY.

Not as if our weakness added anything to God’s power, but it renders His power more signal and conspicuous.—W. BURKITT.

When you ask of God what God praises, what God commands, what God promises in the life to come, then ask fearlessly, and put your whole force, as far as you can, into your prayers, that you may obtain. For such things are granted by God in His gracious mercy ; such things are bestowed by Him, not in anger, but in compassion. But when you are asking for things temporal, ask with qualifications, ask with fear ; commit them to Him that He may give them if they are profitable, and may not give them if He knows them to be harmful. What is harmful, and what is profitable, the physician knows, and not the patient.—AUGUSTINE.

“ My grace is sufficient for thee ” is probably a testimony of the Holy Spirit in the exercise of the highest spiritual functions, by means of which the Apostle’s heart was thoroughly tranquillised, assured of his gracious state and enlightened with respect to this special case. It was thus a distinct revelation of the mind of Christ, by special inspiration in the hour of prayer.—OSIANDER.

THE POWER OF GOD

He was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth through the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him through the power of God.

2 Cor. XIII. 4.

ST. PAUL seems to see in Christ the highest representative instance of the axiomatic law by which he himself had been comforted, that strength is perfected in infirmities. For He too lived encompassed with the infirmities of man's nature, and the possibility of the Crucifixion flowed from that fact as a natural sequel. The thought that underlies the apparently hard saying is that the disciples of Christ share at once in their Lord's weakness and in His strength. "We, too, are weak," the Apostle says; "we have our share in infirmities and sufferings, which are ennobled by the thought they are ours because we are His; but we know that we shall live in the highest sense, in the activities of the spiritual life, which also we share with Him, and which comes to us by the power of God; and this life will be manifested in the exercise of our spiritual power towards you and for your good."—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

As for me, Lord Jesus, my wonder is beyond all wonder that Thou shouldst call us weak in Thee, that Thou shouldst suffer us to lay all our weakness thus to Thy charge; that Thou shouldst give us Thy strength and take our infirmity. And is this, O Lord, the return that those Thy children ought to make? Is this all that Thou requirest of them, to be weak in Thee? Instead of urging them to give proofs of their strength, Thou only commandest them to lean their weakness on Thee. Oh, wonderful superabundance of love! To love not strength only, but weakness.—BERNARD.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

*Be perfected ; be comforted ;
be of the same mind ; live in
peace : and the God of love
and peace shall be with you.*

2 Cor. XIII. 11.

THE Apostle's meaning is, that whereas the members of the Church were all, as it were, dislocated and out of joint, they should be joined together in love ; and they should endeavour to make perfect what was amiss among them, either in faith or morals.—BEZA.

It is a metaphor taken from a building, the several stones and timbers being all put in their proper places and situations, so that the whole building might be complete, and be a proper habitation for the owner. The same figure, though not in the same terms, the Apostle uses, Eph. ii. 20-2. The perfection or rejoining which the Apostle wishes is that which refers to the state of the Church in its fellowship, unity, order. And perfection in the soul is the same, in reference to it, as perfection in the Church is to its order and unity. The perfection or rejoining of the soul implies its purification, and placing every faculty, passion, and appetite in its proper place, so that the original order, harmony, unity, and purity of the soul may be restored, and the whole builded up to be a habitation of God though the Spirit, Eph. ii. 22.—A. CLARKE.

Christian perfection does not indicate finality, but fitness. To make perfect means to make fit, to put in order, adjust, adapt, arrange, and equip, so as to secure effectiveness and efficiency for the result to be achieved. The meaning is the same when applied to Christian life and experience. It is the adjustment, cleansing, and equipment of man's nature for all the purposes of the life in Christ.—S. CHADWICK.

THE APOSTOLIC BENEDICTION

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.

2 Cor. XIII. 14.

THIS Benediction is to be understood as declaring not only the manner of the *descent* of blessings from God to us, through the Son and by the Holy Ghost, but also the means of our *ascent* to God. For through Christ we have our access by one Spirit unto the Father (Eph. ii. 17, 18).—BP. WORDSWORTH.

It is “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”; the loving-kindness or love of God, as it looks upon man in sin, looks upon him only from the face of Jesus Christ; only through His atonement; only through His mediation and intercession. Hence it is His grace; He has connected it with His name for ever; to us, whether on earth or in heaven, grace will be eternally the grace of Christ. Our Lord is the God of grace, as well as the Mediator of the covenant of grace; and His name stands in the forefront of the Benediction, because the bestowment of the favour which rests upon man through Christ’s mediation is the essential preface to every other blessing.

“The love of God” is here viewed in its two-fold manifestation—as the love which was and is behind the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as it is in the heart of man as the source and spring of all that is good and holy in our renewed nature; it is shed abroad within us, not as the effusion of comfort and joy, but as the word itself indicates, as light and strength and cleansing grace poured abundantly into the soul to abide in it for ever.

“The communion of the Holy Ghost” is the partici-

2 CORINTHIANS

pation in the person and gifts of the Divine Spirit, through whose influence alone the inward work of religion is begun, continued, and brought to consummation.—W. B. POPE.

All the favour and beneficence that come from and through the Redeemer of the world ; as the Lord, the ruler and governor of all things ; as Jesus, the Saviour of all men by His passion and death ; as Christ, the distributor of all that Divine power which enlightens, comforts, harmonises, and purifies the mind. May this most exalted, glorious, and all-sufficient Saviour be ever with you !

“ The love of God ”—God, your Maker, in that infinite love which induced Him to create the world, and form man in His own image and in His own likeness, that He might be capable of knowing, loving, and enjoying Him for ever ; and God in the fullest manifestations of that love which caused Him to give His only begotten Son, to the end that they who believe on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. May this God of love and this love of God be ever with you !

May that Holy Spirit, that Divine and eternal energy which proceeds from the Father and the Son ; that heavenly fire that gives light and life, that purifies and refines, sublimes, and exalts, comforts and invigorates, make you all partakers with Himself !

The word which we translate “ fellowship ” and “ communion ” signifies properly participation ; having things in common ; partaking with each other. This points out the astonishing privileges of true believers : they have communion with God’s Spirit ; share in all its gifts and graces ; walk in its light.

A. CLARKE.

An Investigation

THE PROBLEMS OF
1 AND 2 CORINTHIANS

BY

THE BISHOP OF MIDDLETON

THE
THIRD
STUDY

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THE PROBLEMS OF 1 AND 2 CORINTHIANS

BY THE BISHOP OF MIDDLETON

I. THE FORM AND ORDER OF THE EPISTLES

THE two Epistles to the Corinthians formed, together with the Epistles to the Galatians and to the Romans, the four documents which even the radical critics of the Tübingen School recognised as indubitably authentic writings of Paul of Tarsus. Their authenticity has been questioned since only by a few extremists ; both external and internal evidence are too strongly in its favour. But an increasing number of recent investigators, while accepting the authenticity of both Epistles, are persuaded that the order in which their contents are arranged in the Canon of the New Testament does not represent the order in which St. Paul composed them.

Our two Canonical Epistles themselves refer to two other Epistles addressed by the Apostle to the Corinthian Church. In 1 Cor. v. 9 he writes : " I wrote unto you in my epistle to have no company with fornicators," and proceeds in the following verses to explain more exactly what this prohibition implied. There can be little doubt, therefore, that there was an earlier letter than that which we now style " The First Epistle to the Corinthians." And in 2 Cor. ii. 3, 4, and vii. 8, 12 we have references to a letter written " out of much affliction and anguish of heart with many tears," a letter which he knows had made its readers " sorry, though but for a season," and " after a godly sort." Our " First " Epistle does not at all correspond to this description, which must refer to some letter

THE STUDY BIBLE

dispatched between our "First" and "Second" Epistles. We conclude, therefore, that St. Paul must have written at least four Epistles to the Corinthians.

A careful scrutiny of the "Second" Epistle has led several modern scholars to the conclusion that in it we possess, pieced together, fragments of the first, third, and fourth of these four letters.

In 2 Cor. vi. 14—vii. 1 we find an exhortation to avoid fellowship with unbelievers and to maintain purity. This is inappropriate where it stands, and breaks the sequence between vi. 13 and vii. 2, which runs forward smoothly and naturally if the intersecting section be removed. It has been suggested that this section is part of that earlier letter dealing with the Christians having "no company with fornicators" referred to, as we have seen, in 1 Cor. v. 9. If this attractive suggestion is true, then this passage is the earliest fragment we have of St. Paul's correspondence with his Corinthian converts.

All readers of the "Second" Epistle will be struck with the remarkable change in the manner and tone of the writing which suddenly begins at chapter x. The first nine chapters are pervaded with a spirit of joy and peace: they are the expression of thankful relief for a painful episode happily concluded. Chapters x.—xiii., in marked contrast, are passionate, angry, sorrowful; a letter painful to write and painful to read. How are we to explain this extraordinary difference between the first nine and the last four chapters? Those who hold that as they stand they are in their proper order are constrained to admit that something must have happened in the interval between the composition of the last four words of chapter ix. and the first words of chapter x. Various conjectures have been

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

made as to what this something was, but there is no positive evidence in favour of any of them. Moreover, the personal references to the plans and movements of St. Paul and his colleagues Timothy and Titus are, in the present order of these two contrasted sections of the Epistle, so perplexing that one learned expositor is constrained to leave the maze in despair, pathetically complaining that it is "a trackless forest."

These difficulties, however, disappear, and all the cross-references fall into an intelligible order, if we accept the brilliant suggestion that chapters x.—xiii. form part of that letter written "out of much affliction and anguish of heart" which had caused such "sorrow" to its readers referred to in chapters ii. and vii. In other words, the last four chapters of our "Second" Epistle are, it is suggested, part of that *third* of his four letters to the Corinthians which we have seen that St. Paul must have composed, and the first nine chapters of this same "Second" Epistle are part of the *fourth*. The passionate section at the end of this composite document is, therefore, historically of an earlier date than the peaceful section at its beginning.

Space forbids that we should marshal the detailed arguments in favour of this suggestion. The careful consideration which has been given to it by various English scholars of such repute as Drs. Kennedy, Rendall, and Lake has greatly increased our grounds for confidence that it provides a satisfactory solution of otherwise insoluble problems. The main difficulty in the way of accepting it is the difficulty of accounting for the combination of portions of two, or perhaps three, letters into a single letter. It is, however, by no means impossible to suppose that, whereas the "First" Epistle was, owing to its contents, from the

THE STUDY BIBLE

beginning prized by the Corinthians as a most important document, deciding a number of difficult matters with apostolic authority, the other letters received by them from St. Paul were regarded as of comparatively little lasting interest, and lay neglected in their archives. Only later on—perhaps, as Dr. Kennedy has suggested, some forty years afterwards, when Clement of Rome had occasion to draw their attention to what St. Paul had written to them—did interest in them begin to revive, and by this time the manuscripts had fallen into disrepair and disorder. The scribes who copied the fragments of the originals pieced them together as they thought best, and made a single connected letter out of them. And it was from this reconstructed copy that all subsequent copies were made.

In order, therefore, that what remains to us of St. Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians in our two Canonical Epistles may be read in the sequence in which it was most probably composed, we may tabulate it as follows :

First Letter : a fragment in 2 Cor. vi. 14—vii. 1, probably written from Ephesus in A.D. 53.

Second Letter : 1 Cor. i.—xvi., written from Ephesus probably early in A.D. 54.

Third Letter : the closing portion, in 2 Cor. x.—xiii., probably written from Ephesus later in A.D. 54.

Fourth Letter : the opening portion, in 2 Cor. i.—vii., written from Macedonia probably at the end of A.D. 54.

II. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND RECONSTRUCTED

In the light of this rearrangement of their contents, we may reconstruct—far more fully and intelligibly

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

than was possible without it—the history of St. Paul's connection with the Corinthian Church during the period in which these letters were written. And the reconstruction will help us to understand the contents of the epistles as well as throw light on an otherwise unknown chapter of St. Paul's missionary labours.

For the events of St. Paul's first visit to Corinth we are dependent upon the account given us in Acts xviii. 1-18. He apparently reached the city in the latter part of A.D. 50, and remained there for upwards of eighteen months. Corinth was then the most important town in the Balkan Peninsula; it was the capital of the Roman Province of Achaia, and it was also one of the leading mercantile cities of the Empire, for its position on the isthmus ensured that practically all the commerce between Italy and Asia as well as between the Peloponnesus and the North passed through it. It was the centre also of important manufactures in metal work and pottery. Throughout its history its traditions—in contrast to those of its famous neighbour Athens—had been materialistic; and even in the ancient world this cosmopolitan centre enjoyed an evil notoriety for an “abysmal profligacy” intimately connected with certain oriental cults which had long been established in its temples. St. Paul's teaching resulted in the conversion of a considerable number of Corinthians, some of the Jews—notably one Crispus, the “ruler of a synagogue”—but mostly, as we gather from his letters, heathen; several of their names have been preserved in his correspondence, and these bear out the impression of his own blunt words that not many of them were educated, influential, or well-born (1 Cor. i. 26-30). He is equally frank in his description of their characters before conversion:

THE STUDY BIBLE

among them were people who had been grossly immoral, thieves, drunkards, and blackmailers (vi. 9-11). Out of this promising material St. Paul proceeded to build up the Body of Christ in Corinth. And such was his success that the Jews worked up an agitation before the Proconsul Gallio to put an end to his efforts, only to be severely reprimanded by that impartial magistrate. Some time after this St. Paul left Corinth, probably in the early spring of 52. After a journey on which he paid flying visits to Ephesus, Cæsarea, and Jerusalem, and a rather longer one to Antioch, he returned through southern Asia Minor to Ephesus, which he must have reached by the early autumn of A.D. 52. Here he made his head-quarters for upwards of two years, until the later part of A.D. 54 (Acts xix.—xx. 1). And from here the first three of his four letters to the Corinthians were written.

We have no data on which to suggest the possible occasion of the first of these letters ; it may have been sent at any time in A.D. 53 or possibly early in 54. Apollos, the learned Alexandrine Jew, who, before St. Paul's arrival at Ephesus in 52, had been sent to Corinth with letters of commendation from "the brethren" in Ephesus whom, presumably, the teaching of Priscilla and Aquila had converted to Christianity (cf. 1 Cor. xvi. 19), returned to Ephesus probably early in 54. Either with him or independently there also arrived Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, three Corinthian Christians, bearers of a letter from the Corinthian Church asking the Apostle's advice on a number of points. To this letter St. Paul replies about Easter A.D. 54 with his second letter, known to us by its canonical title as the "First Epistle to the Corinthians."

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

From this letter we gather that the Corinthian Church was troubled by divisions and party spirit ; there was an Apollos party and a Cephas party as well as a Paul party. Apollos himself, whom St. Paul clearly regards with all confidence, desiring his immediate return to Corinth, is unwilling to set out just then (1 Cor. xvi. 12), though he intends to return later. Weekly contributions "for the saints" (i.e. the impoverished members of the Church at Jerusalem, as we gather from Acts xvi. 3) are to be begun in Corinth, as already in Galatia. Timothy is already on the way to Corinth (iv. 17, xvi. 10). St. Paul is apparently a little nervous about his reception there : "see that he be with you without fear . . . let no man despise him. But set him forward on his journey in peace, that he may come unto me ; for I await him with the brethren" (xvi. 10-11). St. Paul's own plans of travel are as yet by no means fully determined. He intends to stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, which would give time for Timothy to return together with "the brethren," who are presumably the bearers of this letter (as we conclude from 2 Cor. xii. 18). Later he will travel through Macedonia, and thence to Corinth, for a long stay ; after which possibly Jerusalem (xvi. 3), possibly elsewhere (e.g. Rome ?) (xvi. 7).

In marked contrast to these vague projects is the settled purpose of St. Paul recorded in Acts xix. 21-22, where we are told he "determined in the spirit" (a strong phrase, expressive of the outcome of Divine guidance) to go to Jerusalem, but before he goes there to visit Macedonia and Achaia. After he has been to Jerusalem, he intends to go to Rome. This decision must have been arrived at about Pentecost 54, for Timothy is back again in Ephesus. Timothy and with

THE STUDY BIBLE

him Erastus, a Corinthian convert, are dispatched at once to Macedonia, while the Apostle himself remains behind for a while in Asia. What has happened to lead to this decision? Indications in our "Second Epistle to the Corinthians," combined with hints concerning Timothy in our "First," lead us to the conclusion that there had been a determined revolt against St. Paul's authority carried through by a majority of the Corinthian Church, and that this had come to a climax with the arrival of Timothy and the reception of the "First" Epistle. The Apostle's instructions had been ignored, and his emissary flouted.

Clearly letters and envoys were not enough. The Apostle must visit the Corinthians in person, as he had hinted might be necessary when he wrote (1 Cor. iv. 21). His plan at this time is recorded for us in his own words written at a later date in 2 Cor. i. 15: "I was minded to come unto you before [or "first"] that you might have a second benefit [or "joy"] and by you to pass into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come unto you, and of you to be set forward on my journey unto Judæa." Apparently, as the next words (ver. 16) indicate, St. Paul was later on accused of fickleness with regard to his plans; and we gather two reasons for this accusation. When he wrote 1 Cor. xvi. 5, he intended to visit Macedonia before he visited Corinth; but as a matter of fact he visited Corinth first. This change of plan, he explains, was not due to fickleness, but to his intention of paying them a double visit. But, we gather, only the first of these two projected visits actually took place. The second was given up. Why? Fickleness again? No; he himself explains why: "I call God for a witness upon my soul, that to spare you I did not come again

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

to Corinth " (2 Cor. i. 23); and " I determined this for myself, that I would not come again to you with sorrow " (ii. 1).

From all this we gather that St. Paul paid a second visit to the Corinthians, a visit not recorded in the Acts; that it took place after he had written the " First " Epistle, which makes no reference to it, and before he wrote the " Second," which contains several references to it. This visit, we further gather, was of so painful a nature that the Apostle changed his plans, in order to avoid paying another visit of a like painful kind. Instead of going up to Macedonia from Corinth, as he had intended, and returning thence for a further stay with the Corinthians (bringing with him from there his helper Timothy, to be reinstated with honour among those who had slighted him), he sailed at once for Ephesus.

Back again in Ephesus about midsummer 54, he writes a fiery letter to the rebellious Church, a portion of which has been preserved in 2 Cor. x.—xii. From this we gather that he had not on his unsuccessful visit taken any decisive action, such as excommunication, but had relied, though in vain, upon a spirit of meekness and gentleness. His apostolic authority and his spirituality had been scorned as weakness, and false apostles had usurped his converts' allegiance. He now writes a passionate apologia, vindicating both his apostolate and his " weakness." But he threatens strong measures: " This is the third time I am coming to you " (xii. 14). " I have said beforehand, and I do say beforehand, as when I was present the second time, so now, being absent, to them that have sinned heretofore and to all the rest, that if I come again, I will not spare " (xiii. 1-2). " For this cause I write these

THE STUDY BIBLE

things while absent, that I may not when present deal sharply, according to the authority which the Lord gave me, for building up and not for casting down" (xiii. 10).

Titus is the bearer of this letter, selected because even the rebellious Corinthians cannot accuse him of having ever taken advantage of them (xii. 18). He is to wait in Corinth, watch the development of the situation there, and then journey northwards through Macedonia, cross the narrow sea, and meet St. Paul at Troas, to report on the effect of this severe letter (cf. ii. 13). Meanwhile St. Paul continues for a while his work at Ephesus, until, after the tumult raised by Demetrius the silversmith, he sets forth again, a little earlier perhaps than he had intended, on his missionary travels (Acts xix. 23—xx. 1).

We have a description of the Apostle's state of mind during this journey from his own pen, in the next, the fourth, letter which he was to write to the Corinthians. "We would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power. insomuch that we despaired even of life" (2 Cor. i. 8). "Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ, and when a door was opened unto me in the Lord, I had no relief for my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia" (ii. 12-13). "Even when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no relief, but we were afflicted on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless he that comforteth the lowly, even God, comforted us by the coming of Titus; but not by his coming only, but also by the comfort wherewith he was comforted in you, while he

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me ; so that I rejoiced yet more " (vii. 5-7).

Clearly the severe letter had achieved its purpose, and the difficult mission with which St. Paul had entrusted Titus had met with success. Titus, indeed, had not reached Troas in time to meet St. Paul there, possibly because St. Paul had set out from Ephesus earlier than he had intended. Their happy meeting in Macedonia must have taken place in November or December of A.D. 54.

At once St. Paul composes a fourth letter to the Corinthians, a portion of which has come down to us as "2 Corinthians, chapters i.—ix." Timothy is associated with the Apostle in its opening greetings, which lead on to the glad outburst : " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort ; who comforteth us in all our afflictions, that we may be able to comfort them that be in any affliction with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." The letter proceeds with personal explanations which have already been referred to in our elucidation of the history. We infer that a majority of the Corinthian Christians had inflicted upon the chief offender a punishment which the Apostle regards as adequate, and that he is now concerned to persuade a minority, who out of loyalty to him are still unsatisfied, to forgive and comfort the wrong-doer (2 Cor. ii. 5-7). All this leads up to one of the profoundest and most intimate self-disclosures of the Apostle's mind which his correspondence contains ; in it he unfolds to his readers the inner essence of the Christian ministry as a ministry of reconciliation (iii.—vi. 10), and after applying its message to their particular case, concludes—so far as

THE STUDY BIBLE

the surviving portion of this letter is concerned—with a plea for the completion of the “collection for the saints” which at the end of his “First” Epistle he had asked them to begin. Titus, at the Apostle’s request, has willingly undertaken the supervision of this matter, and two other brethren are associated with him (viii. 6, 16–24, and ix. 5). Probably these three are the bearers of this letter.

St. Paul himself, so we learn from the Acts, after he had gone through Macedonia and given them much exhortation, came into Greece, apparently about the beginning of January 55. Here he abode three months (Acts xx. 3) before he set out for Macedonia once again, leaving Philippi on his last journey to Jerusalem in the spring, “after the days of unleavened bread” (xx. 6). Certainly part of his three months in Greece must have been spent in Corinth, though the Acts give us no particulars of this visit, not even mentioning the name of Corinth, any more than it gives any indication of the troubled course of St. Paul’s relations with the Corinthian Church in the interval that had elapsed since his first visit to that city. “All’s well that ends well.” There was no need to record these things in the very compressed outline of St. Paul’s work which was all the author of the Acts had room for within the limits of his volume. It has been reserved for the careful scrutiny of modern Biblical students to discover, from the indications of St. Paul’s correspondence, a series of events which St. Luke, in the interests of the peace of the Church of his day, thought best to pass over in silence.

The history, then, which forms the background against which we see the picture of the Corinthian Church as these letters reveal it to us, is the history of

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

a quarrel between a missionary and his converts. In the "First" Epistle we can study the rise of differences of opinion between the Apostle and certain parties or "schools of thought" at Corinth; from the "Second," when its contents are rearranged in their historical order, we can reconstruct the probable occasion of the open outburst of the quarrel—the Corinthians' treatment of the young apostolic envoy Timothy—and its subsequent development, until it ended with the re-establishment of St. Paul's authority.

III. PARTIES AND PARTY SPIRIT AT CORINTH

The contents of the "First" Epistle throw light not only on the nature of the opposition to St. Paul at Corinth which issued in such strained relations, but also on a number of matters concerning both faith and morals which greatly interested the early Christians. About no other primitive Christian community do we know so much as we know about the Corinthian Church, thanks to this epistle.

After the opening salutation (1 Cor. i. 1-9), the Apostle deals with matters which had come to his knowledge through information gained from some members of the household of Chloe (i. 11), a Christian lady otherwise unknown who had some connection with both Corinth and Ephesus. These matters occupy the first six chapters. At the beginning of the seventh chapter, St. Paul refers to a letter which the Corinthians had sent to him, very probably by the hands of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (xvi. 17), and chapters vii.-xvi. deal with questions raised by the letter and supplementary verbal information given by these three Corinthians.

THE STUDY BIBLE

The matters dealt with in the first six chapters are all matters calling for reproof. The most important of them is that of party spirit (chapters i. 10—iv. 21). It is clear that there were at least three parties at Corinth, calling themselves after the names of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas (i. 12 ; cf. iii. 22). Even this has been doubted, but the words in 1 Cor. iv. 6 on which the doubt has been based do not really support it. For when St. Paul writes at that point, " Now these things I have transferred in a figure [or " by a fiction "] to myself and Apollos for your sakes," he does not mean that the parties of Paul and Apollos did not really exist, and that he had used these names merely as pseudonyms to screen certain unnamed party leaders ; but rather that Paul and Apollos themselves did not regard themselves as party leaders at all, but merely as " ministers of Christ " ; and that he, Paul, had written as he had done in the immediately preceding passage (iii. 21—iv. 5) in order to warn his readers against " glorying in men " and " being puffed up for the one against the other."

It is a disputed point whether there was also a fourth party, claiming for itself exclusively the name of Christ. In the sentence, " Each one of you saith, I am of Paul ; and I of Apollos ; and I of Cephas ; and I of Christ," the last phrase may either be the party cry of a fourth party, consisting of those who, in order to protest against all parties, form yet another party ; or it may equally well be translated " but I am of Christ," and in that case be intended as a rebuke on the part of the writer against all the three other party cries alike. In favour of the latter interpretation is the fact that it gives added force to the question which immediately follows : " Is Christ divided ? " ; and we note also

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

that there is no mention of a Christ party at the two later points in the Epistle where Paul, Apollos, and Cephas are again mentioned (iii. 4 and 21-3), but only of Christ as the common Lord of all. In favour of the former interpretation is the passage in 2 Cor. x. 7, "If any man thinketh in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again with himself, that, even as he is Christ's, so also are we." These words have been taken as corroborating the existence of a "Christ party" at Corinth, and their context makes it plain, that if this be their true significance, it was against the members of this "Christ party" that the severe letter (2 Cor. x.-xiii.) was directed, and they must have constituted the Apostle's opponents in the quarrel. But the passage does not demand such an interpretation, for the claim to be Christ's was made by all Christians alike, of whatever party, and allowed by St. Paul of them all, provided they did not arrogate it exclusively to themselves. The existence of a separate "Christ party" is too doubtful an hypothesis to be accepted as the basis of any reconstruction of the Corinthian situation, if we can understand it sufficiently well without recourse to it, by simply supposing that there existed only the three parties calling themselves after Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, which the Epistle clearly asserts there were. But can we?

We note that, in marked contrast with his fierce indignation at the errors into which his Galatian converts had been seduced, St. Paul does not proceed to specify and refute any particular errors of doctrine held by these parties. He only attacks party spirit itself, as contrary to the spirit of Christ. The various presentations of Christianity manifested among the Corinthians had not, at any rate as yet, developed into

THE STUDY BIBLE

doctrines inconsistent with his Gospel. There was room for them all, provided Christ were not divided.

With Apollos himself St. Paul was clearly on the most friendly terms. He regards him as one of God's fellow-workers, watering the seed which the Apostle had planted (iii. 5-9), and has no hesitation in urging his return to Corinth. The Apollos party therefore were clearly going beyond their leader, if they set him up as a rival to St. Paul, as they apparently did.

Concerning the Cephas party, the Epistle tells us nothing beyond the fact of its existence. It is pressing the argument from silence too far to argue from this that it was the main centre of opposition to St. Paul. The theory that it consisted of Judaisers, such as those who caused so much trouble among the Galatians, has no clear evidence in its favour. There is no reference in any of his Corinthian correspondence to the disputes concerning the Law and Circumcision, or Faith and Works, which are the burning questions in the Judaistic controversy, as we see it waged in the Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans. Nor are there any grounds for regarding St. Peter as an opponent of St. Paul's missionary enterprises. It is indeed perfectly possible that St. Peter, as he travelled about preaching to the "Circumcision" (which must have included the Jews of the Dispersion), came to Corinth among other places, and that the Cephas party there consisted of those whom he had converted. In that case, they would not be "Judaisers" of the type St. Paul had to contend against in Galatia, but in all probability a group of Jewish Christians, who may not always have been ready to agree with the teachings of the great vindicator of Christian liberty on matters such as some of those raised by the letter from the Corinthian

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

Church. We have, however, no reason to regard them as the only or even the principal opponents of St. Paul at Corinth.

Neither can we be at all certain that the opposition is to be identified with the Apollos party. St. Paul devotes a good deal of space, in the section of his letter dealing with party spirit, to an explanation of the reason why he had not preached to the Corinthians "in wisdom of words," albeit he claims that there is a "wisdom" which he does declare among those who are fitted to receive it (i. 17, ii. 1, 6-10, iii. 1-3). These passages, together with the fact that Apollos was an Alexandrine Jew and a learned man (Acts xviii. 24), and therefore probably "wise" in that allegorical treatment of the Scriptures by means of which Philo and his school sought to harmonise the teaching of the Bible with Greek philosophy, have led to the supposition that the Apollos party is to be identified with those who, because they laid claim to being more truly "spiritual," found fault with the Apostle for not having come among them "with excellence of speech and of wisdom." It is clear that this question of "wisdom" was connected with the partisanship that St. Paul deplored; also that those who thus exalted wisdom claimed to be "spiritual" (*pneumatikoi*), though St. Paul questioned their claim. But it is by no means clear that they belonged exclusively to the followers of Apollos. They may have done; and their excessive claims to wisdom and spirituality may have led their leader to return to Corinth to consult with the Apostle. But we have no proof that Apollos was a philosopher at all beyond the fact that he came from Alexandria. Still less have we any reason to think that his teaching would lead to such

THE STUDY BIBLE

exaggerated claims to "spirituality" as those which ultimately led the party so seriously rebuked by St. Paul in this part of his first Epistle to develop into the open rebels against his authority against whom he inveighs in his "severe letter." For it is clear that the opponents there dealt with claim that they are "walking according to the spirit," whereas he is "walking according to the flesh" (2 Cor. x. 2). This is made evident not only by this passage, but by the nature of the criticisms levelled by them against the Apostle, which he rebuts in that letter.

The indications in the two Epistles combine to assure us that the opposition to St. Paul was led by Jews; that they claimed to have apostles far superior to him, and to have attained a far higher spirituality than his, by virtue of their greater freedom from any restraints, such as he would impose upon Christian conduct; they asserted, no doubt, that the only thing that mattered was that they should have "the Spirit." That there were Jews of the Dispersion who professed libertarian theories we learn from Philo; that such Jews would accept and all too easily exaggerate St. Paul's teaching about the liberty of Christians from the observance of the Mosaic Law into out-and-out Antinomianism is more than probable; and they would find eager followers among the Gentile converts in such a city as Corinth. Their specious "wisdom" and unbalanced "spirituality" would quickly degenerate into an immorality claiming religious sanctions, such as was all too familiar in the heathen world. With such a movement St. Paul could have no sympathy. So far as it merely expressed misguided theories he would argue with it as he does, for instance, in 1 Cor. vi. 12-20 and v. 9-13. But when it issued in immoral

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

action he demands stern discipline, as in 1 Cor. v. 1-8 and 2 Cor. xii. 20-xiii. 3. It was to deal with the situation caused by such teaching that he had sent Timothy before he wrote the first Epistle and threatened to come himself, if need be, "with a rod" (1 Cor. iv. 14-21). It was to combat it personally, after Timothy's failure, that he paid his second, "painful" visit and wrote the second letter. It was the final recognition of his authority and the enforcement of the discipline which he had demanded upon the ringleader or ringleaders of this movement by the majority of the Corinthian Christians which led him to write his last Epistle. But whether the party who opposed him is to be identified with the Apollos party or with the problematical "Christ party" must remain doubtful. What is plain is that in the Corinthian Epistles St. Paul is dealing with a Jewish opposition quite different in character from that which he was combating when he wrote to the Galatians. In Galatia the trouble was due to conservative, legalistic propaganda; in Corinth to radical Antinomianism.

IV. CHRISTIANITY AND SEX-MORALS

Hence we find that St. Paul is concerned to define his attitude towards sexual questions. In three passages, he deals with sexual immorality (1 Cor. v. 1-13; vi. 12-20; x. 8, cf. 2 Cor. xii. 21), and it is clear that he is dealing not merely with lapses due to the weakness of Gentile converts, but with an attitude of mind that considered such immorality (incest and fornication) as compatible with a "spiritual" religion. "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats" was the tag from which these would-be Christian libertines argued that

THE STUDY BIBLE

sexual immorality was a merely physical and therefore non-moral action, like eating or drinking ; that bodily actions do not affect the spirit ; that for the truly spiritual person, freed by the Gospel from legalist " taboos " and initiated into the fellowship of Christ by participation in the " mysteries " of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, " all things were lawful." In Corinth it would not be difficult to be persuaded that sexual excesses, so far from being incompatible with true spirituality, might even express or stimulate it. St. Paul combats this whole position by asserting that our bodies are limbs of Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit ; and that it is in and through our bodies that our spirits glorify God (vii. 20). Our physical appetites will perish, but our bodies, as the organs of our spirits, are destined to be partakers in that " resurrection " which the Christian is to share with Christ.

We are not surprised that such excesses on the one hand should have produced an exaggerated asceticism on the other, which looked askance at marriage, regarding it either as a thing to be opposed, or at least to be deprived of all sexual significance (1 Cor. vii. 1-7). St. Paul evidently himself preferred the ascetic ideal, and recommended it both to married and unmarried, if they were capable of maintaining it. But he frankly recognised a diversity of types, and defended the propriety of marriage for all Christians who felt called to it ; " as God hath called each, so let him walk " (vii. 17).

As regards divorce, it seems plain from 1 Cor. vii. 10-16 that the Apostle was convinced that the question of the remarriage of divorced persons was settled, so far as Christian married couples are concerned, by the prohibition of the Lord. Separation, without re-

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

marriage, is all that is permitted (vii. 10-11); neither he nor his Corinthian readers, it is interesting to notice, betray knowledge of any exception, such as that in St. Matthew v. 32, to this absolute ruling of the Lord's. It is possible, though it is nowhere clearly stated in his own words, that St. Paul would have agreed with the Fathers of the Church in subsequent centuries in not forbidding the marriage of a Christian, who after conversion had been finally left by his or her unconverted partner, to a new Christian spouse. But Christians are not to put away unchristian partners, unless the latter desert them; in which case they need not remain "enslaved" (vii. 12-15).

The "virgins" concerning whom he gives advice in vii. 25-38 were, it is agreed by an increasing number of modern commentators, not the unmarried daughters of Christian fathers, who might be doubtful as to the propriety of allowing them to be married. As the researches of Achelis have shown, the whole passage, in all probability, deals with the beginning of a curious and now almost forgotten practice, known as "spiritual marriage," which, as we may learn from the writings of Irenæus, Tertullian, and Cyprian, was common enough among Christians in the second and third centuries, though it was gradually suppressed, because of its inherent danger, by ecclesiastical authority in the following centuries. In these "spiritual marriages," men and women lived together under a vow of virginity; the women were technically styled "*virgines subintroductæ*." St. Paul is not opposed to these "spiritual marriages" in themselves, nor is he opposed to their termination, when desired, by an ordinary marriage. If this explanation of a doubtful and difficult passage be correct, it is clear that St. Paul's advice in

THE STUDY BIBLE

these verses is of antiquarian rather than of practical interest. And indeed it is important to remember that St. Paul in all his advice upon these sexual matters is dealing with local and temporary conditions, though he seeks to base his teaching on abiding principles. We cannot but be struck by his unswerving loyalty to what he believed to be the highest ideal, combined with a most human realisation of the manifold varieties of temperament and what they imply.

V. CHRISTIANITY AND THE SPIRIT-WORLD

St. Paul was asked by the Corinthians to answer questions concerning certain matters of cultus: the partaking of food offered to idols, and the use of "spiritual gifts," especially in connection with the community's meetings for worship. Both the questions asked and the answers given depend on beliefs concerning "spirits" current among pagans, Jews, and Christians alike in the first century, which to many moderns will appear both dubious and strange. Both Pagans and Jews believed that the world was full of "spirits" or "demons," some good, some bad. Hosts of invisible beings encompassed it, seeking to enter and take possession of human beings and inanimate things. Religion and magic were alike largely concerned with the business of dealing with these powers, avoiding obsession by the evil, and securing the inspiration of the good. The "mystery cults" owed not a little of their attractiveness to their supposed efficacy in mediating intercourse with good spirits, by means of symbolic ceremonies, notable among which were the sacred meals. At these the initiates thought to win fellowship with the "Lord" of their

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

“mystery” by eating with him at his table, or actually to assimilate him or a spirit emanating from him by means of food offered and consecrated to him, of which he in consequence took possession. Many of those who took part in these ceremonies were no doubt sincerely convinced that they received spiritual help through them. Not infrequently this assurance found expression in more or less ecstatic experiences, such as visions, inspired speech, or “prophecy,” and what is best referred to by its Greek name *glossolalia* (literally “tongue-speaking”). This latter, there can be little doubt, refers not to a miraculous gift of speaking in foreign languages, such as may be implied by the account of what happened at the first Pentecost (in Acts ii.), but to a rush of more or less unintelligible sounds uttered in a state of ecstasy, when the organs of speech no longer functioned under the conscious control of the speaker.

Modern theology has by its researches into the nature of the popular religious observances rife in the Græco-Roman world of the early Christian centuries shed a flood of light on the background of belief and practice concerning the spirit-world which is presupposed in St. Paul's letters, and indeed in the whole of the New Testament. Modern psychology has thrown an equally brilliant light upon the significance of the phenomena thus disclosed. We know now that they were not confined to the Christian communities of the Apostolic age, but have been found among others than Christians then and since, and among Christians of later ages, at times of religious upheaval. The fundamental problem for us, in considering these rather abnormal varieties of religious experience, is to decide upon their true nature and their spiritual and moral value. Are they

THE STUDY BIBLE

simply the fruits of mere fantasy, the uprush into the conscious reaches of our personalities of the obscure and primitive contents of our "subliminal selves," released when once our faculties of control are relaxed or disordered by some strong emotional stimulus? Or are they really, in some cases at any rate, the outcome of communion with some being or beings other than ourselves? And in either case, are they a desirable element in human life or not?

Now, St. Paul was also, at bottom, concerned with these problems, when giving his answers to the questions addressed to him by the Corinthians. It is his conviction that the hosts of demons, "the gods many and lords many" believed in by the pagans, do exist. They are not mere fantasies, but they are not gods. He is equally convinced that Christians in their religious experience and worship can and do have communion and converse with the one and only Divine Reality that there is. Fellowship with God in Christ, through possession of His Spirit and possession by His Spirit, is the most real thing in life. And because there is only one God, only one Lord, only one Spirit, Christians must not desecrate their fellowship with the true and real by having any truck with the false.

This conviction underlies his answer to the question about the eating of food offered to idols. The enlightened and "spiritual" section at Corinth said that because an idol was nothing, as St. Paul himself allowed, to offer food to an idol could not contaminate it; therefore no harm could be done to Christians who partook of such food, whether after they had bought it at the market, or when it was offered to them as guests of some heathen friend at a ceremonial feast held in honour of his god. St. Paul agrees, so far as the mere fact of

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

eating food thus offered to idols is concerned ; let them take it as it comes and ask no questions ; merely to eat it is no harm. But if someone deliberately draws attention to the fact that you, a Christian, are partaking of something the heathen think is really sacred to one of their false gods, then refuse it ; not because the food is contaminated, but for the sake of the person who tells you. For to him, be he pagan or a Christian less enlightened than yourself, the idols have a genuine, if subjective, reality ; and to partake of food sacrificed to them implies fellowship with demons, who are all too real. Therefore your carelessness or indifference, however enlightened in itself, may mislead others, and bring you also into danger yourself. And so the Apostle is led to enunciate his great guiding principle. " All things are lawful ; but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful ; but all things build not up. Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbour's good " (1 Cor. x. 23, 24).

This principle also underlies his treatment of what must have been a very troublesome practical problem, the regulation of the activities of the " spiritual persons " in the exercise of their " spiritual gifts " in the meetings of the community. We must always remember that, when speaking of " spiritual persons " (*pneumatikoi*) and their " spiritual gifts " (*pneumatika charismata*), St. Paul and his readers understand persons possessed of a definite " spirit," a real being other than themselves, whose presence and power within them were the cause of definite capacities and activities, which the " spirit," and not the person possessed by the spirit, manifested. The words " spirit " and " spiritual " had not for them the vaguer, if more ethical, sense which they have for us, when we speak of having the spirit of St. Paul or

THE STUDY BIBLE

St. Francis or Luther or Wesley. Among the Corinthians there was a most exuberant manifestation of these spiritual gifts by a number of spiritual persons : it was necessary to be able to decide upon their genuineness and their comparative value. As to their genuineness, St. Paul at the outset lays down the principle : only that person is inspired by the true spirit who acknowledges the Lordship of Jesus : " No one can say, Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit " (1 Cor. xii. 3). And the comparative value of the various spiritual gifts, all alike recognised as proceeding from the energy of one and the self-same Spirit, is to be appraised by their usefulness in building up the community life ; by their power to " edify," rather than by their power to astound. There is a place for them all ; the common life of the Body of Christ will be impoverished if any of them suffers loss or extinction ; we cannot all alike do the same things ; there is a distribution of powers, and a differentiation of functions ; the one thing that matters supremely is that one and all—whatever their " gifts"—should above all else follow after Love.

From this it follows that " prophecy," that gift of inspired utterance which declares God's will, and speaks unto men edification, encouragement, and consolation (xiv. 3), is a greater gift than " glossolalia," " speaking with tongues," because the latter, though in itself at first sight more ecstatic, marvellous, and inexplicable, edifies only the speaker and not the community, because it is unintelligible. It is important to notice that St. Paul claims himself to have this gift of " tongues " more abundantly than any of them, and can thank God for it ; and in his later letter, when he is criticised for lack of spirituality, he vindicates his authority by the

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

confident assertion, "The signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and works of power." He was undoubtedly convinced of his own personal inspiration by a supernatural being, because of supernatural activities manifested through him. His modern readers are even more convinced of his inspiration by the supremacy which he attributes throughout to the power of Love, and the sanctified common sense with which he is thus enabled to deal with spiritual gifts and their possessors.

Our appreciation of the supreme importance of the ethical elements in religious life should not, however, blind us to the value of gifts and powers of inspiration, vision, ecstasy, and spiritual healing, which most of us are inclined to ignore and even to suspect, because of the dangers of their extravagance. Their suppression, however, as modern psychology teaches us, may be as dangerous to individual personalities as their indiscriminate manifestation; and it may at the same time deprive the common life of the Church of elements of variety and vigour without which it cannot experience in itself or display to the world the full richness of spiritual endowment which is available to mankind through contact with the Spirit of God. St. Paul never attempted to suppress "spiritual gifts," but always to impress them into the service of the common good. Thus alone could they find their truest and fullest expression.

VI. ST. PAUL AND THE EUCHARIST

The first Epistle to the Corinthians is also notable for containing the only direct teaching which we have from St. Paul concerning the Eucharist. Neither the

THE STUDY BIBLE

nature of that teaching itself nor such knowledge as we possess of the sacred feasts celebrated by the devotees of the pagan Mysteries justifies the assumption that St. Paul was responsible, as some have suggested, for instituting the Eucharist as a Christian counterpart of the Mystery Feasts, transforming symbolical words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper into a commemoration and communion ceremony to be perpetually celebrated by the Church. The account of the institution in 1 Cor. xi. 23 ff. is the earliest we possess ; St. Paul claims to have received it "from the Lord," whether directly by a "revelation" or indirectly by tradition from those who were Apostles before him is not made clear. The most striking difference between the Pauline accounts and those included in the original text of the Synoptic Gospels is that the latter record no command to repeat the rite ; St. Paul alone records the words, "This do in remembrance of Me." It is rash to argue from this fact that he, on the strength of a personal revelation, instituted the repetition of a rite, which up till then had not been regarded by the original disciples as intended for repetition at all. Such an innovation could hardly have been introduced without controversies of which some echoes must have resounded in the New Testament.

As regards the ideas St. Paul himself held concerning the Eucharist, the following points—in spite of long-continued controversy—seem clear. (1) In the Lord's Supper there is a real and actual, not merely a symbolical, participation in the Lord's Body and Blood (1 Cor. x. 15-16 ; cf. xi. 27-29). (2) This participation is spoken of as connected with the "blessing" of the Cup and the "breaking" of the Bread, i.e. with an act of "consecration" or setting apart of the elements for

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

this sacred purpose ; the Lord's Body and Blood were, therefore, it would seem, regarded as made available for participation to the whole Church corporately by "consecration," though with a view to their appropriation by individuals through their reception of the elements. (3) The bread is still spoken of as bread after consecration ; and, in St. Paul's account of the Institution, the Lord's words of administration when He gave the cup to His disciples are not, as in the tradition recorded in St. Matthew and St. Mark, "This is My blood of the covenant," but "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." These facts make it plain that St. Paul did not hold any doctrine implying a change in the elements such as would produce a complete identification of the bread and wine with the Lord's Body and Blood. (4) The analogy which St. Paul draws in 1 Cor. x. 6, 8, between Jewish and Christian "sacraments" implies that he regarded the Eucharist as "spiritual food" and "spiritual drink." For him and his readers this would imply something quite definite and concrete, not a mere pious idea, or simply a metaphorical or imaginative "spiritual feast," but a participation in a heavenly entity, far more truly and fully real than any conceivable participation "after the flesh." (5) The eating and drinking of the consecrated Loaf and Cup—not their "consecration"—is an act which "proclaims" Christ's death until the Parousia. The word translated "proclaim" signifies not a "showing forth" before God, but a public declaration before men. (6) On the other hand, in the Lord's command "Do this in remembrance of Me," the word *anamnesis*, translated "remembrance," though in classical Greek it means simply a "reminder," is used in the Epistle to the Hebrews and in the Septua-

THE STUDY BIBLE

gint Version of the Old Testament in sacrificial contexts which suggest rather than preclude the idea of a "memorial" or "commemoration" before God, as well as a reminder to men. Such a "memorial" signifies, of course, not a reminding of God, but a solemn assertion that that which is thus remembered is deserving of such solemn commemoration before Him. (7) The Eucharist is regarded as the Christian counterpart to those Jewish and pagan sacrificial feasts at which the worshippers partook of the food offered to the God. This sacrificial parallelism cannot, however, be pressed to imply more than that the Bread and Cup were offered to God in the Eucharist, for Him to bless them for our participation. It does not imply any offering of the elements when consecrated as a sacrifice to the Father, nor any kind of repetition of that Sacrifice of Christ which the Eucharist commemorates. (8) Mere participation in the Eucharist did not of itself secure safety from falling into idolatry or other sins, or from Divine displeasure at such wrongdoing; this is the point of the warning by St. Paul in 1 Cor. x. 16, from the history of the fate of numbers of Israelites, even after they had partaken of spiritual meat and spiritual drink. The Eucharist had no mechanical efficacy, such as converts who had participated in pagan "Mystery Feasts" might erroneously imagine. (9) The rite was celebrated as part of a social meal, the Agape or love-feast, but it was far more than a social meal, it was the Lord's Supper; selfishness, greed, intemperance, and disorder such as occurred at Corinth were therefore a negation of the Eucharist, a nullification of its unifying social effect: "seeing that there is one bread, we who are many are one body: for we all partake of the one bread" (x. 17). To

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

come "unworthily" is to be guilty of profaning the sacrificed Body and Blood of Christ (xi. 27). Let no one come thoughtlessly to the feast, without testing his soul. For whoever partakes "not discerning the body"—that is to say, failing to discriminate the underlying spiritual reality and its corporate and social implications—will be partaking of that which is in itself a condemnation of all such partakers. Such profanation produces weakness, sickness, sleep (i.e. death). St. Paul believes that moral weakness and deadness produce their physical counterpart (xi. 29–32).

VII. THE RESURRECTION

The famous fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle deals with the question of the Resurrection of the Dead. Further light on the same question is thrown by a more poignant and personal passage in 2 Cor. iv. 16—v. 10. It is important to emphasise at the outset that there was no question among the Corinthians as to the fact of a future life and immortality; nor any question as to the fact that Christ had actually risen from the dead. The difficulty dealt with in the First Epistle is rather as to the nature of the future life: was it, as Greek converts would naturally think, a survival and ascent of the soul or spirit, which after death left behind for good and all the bondage of the flesh and all that is temporal and finite? Or was it, as Jewish converts would hold, attained only at and through a resurrection of the flesh, by means of which mortals would be revived as they had formerly been in their earthly life, with a view to judgment and a future according to their deserts? St. Paul neither agrees nor disagrees entirely with either view. He is sure that

THE STUDY BIBLE

Jesus rose : His resurrection, as the reference to His burial in the Apostolic tradition recorded in 1 Cor. xv. 3-7 makes clear, was bodily. Therefore Christians also will have a bodily resurrection, because of their union with Christ. But he recognises a truth in the Greek view : " this I admit, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." The risen body is not the same kind of body as the organism of flesh and blood needed for this present life. For there exist different kinds of bodies ; this is true even in the sphere of physical nature : the seed sown is not " the body that shall be," but far different, owing to the variety of God's creative activity, which gives " to every seed a body of its own." And there are " spiritual " bodies as well as " natural " bodies. The Resurrection Body will not be " natural," flesh and blood, corruptible, weak, mortal ; but " spiritual," incorruptible, strong, and deathless. By " spirit " and " spiritual " St. Paul means, as we have already seen, something quite definite, concrete, objective, and real. In connection with the Resurrection Body, the word " spiritual " applies both to the kind of supernatural, heavenly, non-carnal " stuffs " of which the organism will be composed, and also to its dominant characteristic : it will be an organ fitted perfectly to express the activities of the perfected " spiritual " being which the risen Christian will have become, by virtue of the indwelling Spirit of the God who raised Christ from the dead (cf. Rom. viii. 9-11). The future life is not to be a life of bare formless spirits, but of whole and completed personalities " clothed " by God with organs perfectly adequate to their self-expression (1 Cor. xv. 53, 54, 2 Cor. v. 2-4). This is the victory over death which God gives to men through

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

Christ ; for death does not slay the soul, it vanquishes the body. Yet the principle which links the body vanquished by death to the spiritual body which shall be is not physical, but spiritual ; for it is the persisting personality of the Christian, who, in spite of bodily death, has the eternal life of the spirit of God living in him, through his union with Jesus Christ.

Such a conception of the nature of the future life, and of its relationship to the life here, is at once free from the crudities of Jewish eschatology and the cold and abstract conceptions of the Greek. It gives value and sanctity to the physical bodies which are the organs of our personalities here, as well as the assurance of a yet more marvellous organism which we should be fitting ourselves to control hereafter, when "what is mortal shall be swallowed up by life" (cf. 2 Cor. v. 1-5).

Such, then, were some of the problems and difficulties confronting the infant Church at Corinth, and such the teaching with which its founder and Apostle sought to build it up. Nevertheless, as we have seen in our elucidation of the history that underlies these Epistles, neither his personal ability nor the truth and wisdom of his doctrine were sufficient to prevent a revolt against his authority. It is clear that the Corinthian community was as yet extremely immature. Its members could not be regarded as fully grown. They had not yet reached the stage, apparently, when they could be entrusted with anything like a system of self-government ; there are no traces of any ordered local ministry, with official authority to govern ; all depended as yet on apostolic guidance and obedience to apostolic rule. Hence the intense anxiety and the fierce determination of St. Paul to restore the authority

THE STUDY BIBLE

which had been questioned and repudiated. It is clear that the condition of affairs revealed at Corinth cannot be taken as a model for the Churches of later times, but rather as a warning for every age of the absurdities and worse into which self-appointed leaders of religious faction may fall.

But the letters to the Corinthians are also imperishable examples for all time of the true spirit and the true methods by which authority must be exercised in the Church of Christ. Those who are called upon to lead and rule their fellow-Christians will never fulfil their difficult task unless they remember with St. Paul that it is a "ministry of reconciliation" which is entrusted to them. As we ponder over such an outpouring of the Apostle's heart as that contained in 2 Cor. iii.—vii. 4, we realise that what he is vindicating is not his own authority, but that of Christ, crucified yet ever-living.

EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

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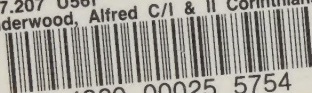
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35

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